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ABSTRACT

SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education (SERVE) is one of the 10 federally funded regional educational laboratories. This annual publication captures and shares the experiences of SERVE school districts that have volunteered to share their efforts at assessment reform. This issue contains the following: (1) "We Never Get over the Fear of Failure: R&D on the Road with Nancy McMunn" (Nancy McMunn); (2) "Head & Heart into Assessment: An Overview of SERVE's Research and Development Assessment Project" (Wendy McColskey, Nancy McMunn, and Sara Thompson); (3) "Creating a Hotspot of Activity: The District Perspective" (Beth Deluzain and Patricia Schenck); (4) "Life within the Hotspot: The School and Teacher Perspective" (Wendy McColskey and Nancy McMunn); (5) "Spotlight on a School Assessment Project: Electronic Portfolios at Bugg Elementary" (Mary Q. Penta and Sheila Wright); (6) "What's Happening in Other States? Spotlight on South Carolina's Office of Assessment" (Susan Agruso, Cathi Snyder, and Marc Drews); and (6) "Brief View: Other SERVE Research and Development Projects." (SLD)

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Assessment Hotspots

Volume 1, Number 1

ED 434 902

R&D On the Road with Nancy McMunn

Head & Heart Into Assessment

Creating a HotSpot of Activity

Life Within the HotSpot

Spotlight on a School Assessment Project

What's Happening in Other States?

TM030129

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Improving Learning through Research & Development

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Annual Magazine

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HOTSPOTS

Demonstration Sites

Featuring in This Issue
Bay District Schools

*** Demonstration Sites**

School Districts Working with SERVE's R&D Assessment Project

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HEAD AND HEART INTO ASSESSMENT
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This article describes the background and scope of SERVE's work with district demonstration sites in the southeast. It describes why assessment reform is important and how SERVE is working with districts to build teacher capacity to reflect on classroom assessment practices.

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This article shares the experiences of one of SERVE's first district demonstration sites, Bay District Schools in Panama City, Florida. It describes the multiple-year design of their professional development program in assessment and some lessons learned.

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Other SERVE Research and Development Projects

1998
Volume 1, Number 1

SERVE
SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education

Associated with the School of Education University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Assessment HotSpots is an assessment magazine featuring the work of educators in the Southeast. It will be produced annually and will be available on SERVE's Web page (http://www.serve.org). If you have an idea or project you would like to see published or if you have questions or a need for more information, please contact Nancy McMunn at SERVE (800-755-3277) or at nancy.mcmunn@serve.org.

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About the SERV

SERVE, the SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education, is a consortium of educational organizations whose mission is to promote and support the continual improvement of educational opportunities for all learners in the Southeast. Formed by a coalition of business leaders, governors, policymakers, and educators seeking systemic, lasting improvement in education, the organization is governed and guided by a Board of Directors that includes the chief state school officers, governors, and legislative representatives from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Committed to creating a shared vision of the future of education in the Southeast, the consortium impacts educational change by addressing critical educational issues in the region, acting as a catalyst for positive change, and serving as a resource to individuals and groups striving for comprehensive school improvement.

SERVE's core component is a regional educational laboratory funded since 1990 by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education. Building from this core, SERVE has developed a system of programs and initiatives that provides a spectrum of resources, services, and products for responding effectively to national, regional, state, and local needs. SERVE is a dynamic force, transforming national education reform strategies into progressive policies and viable initiatives at all levels. SERVE Laboratory programs and key activities are centered around

- Applying research and development related to improving teaching, learning, and organizational management
- Serving the educational needs of young children and their families more effectively
- Providing field and information services to promote and assist local implementation of research-based practices and programs
- Offering policy services, information, and assistance to decision makers concerned with developing progressive educational policy
- Connecting educators to a regional computerized communication system so that they may search for and share information and network
- Developing and disseminating publications and products designed to give educators practical information and the latest research on common issues and problems

The Eisenhower Consortium for Mathematics and Science Education at SERVE is part of the national infrastructure for the improvement of mathematics and science education sponsored by OERI. The consortium coordinates resources, disseminates exemplary instructional materials, and provides technical assistance for implementing teaching methods and assessment tools.

The SouthEast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (SEIR◆TEC) serves 14 states and territories. A seven-member partnership led by SERVE, the consortium offers a variety of services to foster the infusion of technology into K-12 classrooms. The Region IV Comprehensive Assistance Center provides a coordinated, comprehensive approach to technical assistance through its partnership with SERVE.

A set of special purpose institutes completes the system of SERVE resources. These institutes provide education stakeholders extended site-based access to high quality professional development programs, evaluation and assessment services, training and policy development to improve school safety, and subject area or project-specific planning and implementation assistance to support clients' school improvement goals.

Following the distributive approach to responding and providing services to its customers, SERVE has ten offices in the region. The North Carolina office at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro is headquarters for the Laboratory's executive services and operations. Policy offices are located in the departments of education in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

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Acknowledgments

A Teacher's Attitude

"I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized."

—Haim Ginnott, Teacher and Psychologist

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Peggy Hanson
Kelly Lovett
Kathleen Preuss
Lisa Swertfager
Margaret Wentworth
Janet Anderson
James Davis
Jonas Douglas
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Overview of Publication

SERVE, as one of the ten federally funded regional educational laboratories, disseminates research-based knowledge that will help schools improve. But there are at least two kinds of knowledge to share. One kind is the typical, university-based, social science research. The other kind is craft or practitioner knowledge (educators writing about what they have done and what they have learned from what they have tried). This publication honors this second kind of knowledge. In it, we have asked educators who are involved in assessment reform at the district, school, and classroom level to share their experiences.

The need for assessment reform is twofold. Most states have revised their Curriculum Frameworks or State Standards Documents to reflect emerging national standards. For these new standards to be implemented in the classroom, teachers need opportunities to develop assessments that align with these standards. Secondly, student motivation is increasingly recognized as a key educational outcome. Traditional tests do not consistently engage students as active and intrinsically motivated learners. Assessment is increasingly seen as needing to be relevant to the real world and involve the student in a meaningful self-assessment process. If students are assigned "quality" work to do, they will more likely become quality workers and thinkers.

SERVE has an ongoing Research and Development project that supports volunteer demonstration districts in the process of assessment reform; SERVE also supports and values the assessment work of others in the region. The primary purpose of this publication, ***Assessment HotSpots***, is to periodically capture and share the experiences and learning of these districts and others. As other districts read about their experiences, they may realize that focusing on assessment changes at the district level can be a meaningful tool and driving force in the restructuring process. ❍

We Never Get

Assessment is not just about "success" or "failure" but about learning—learning what to do, how to do it, and knowing what needs improvement.

Carmen, a middle school teacher, recently attended the follow-up to a session on assessment training that I had facilitated. The previous presentation was on "Creating Effective Student Assessments" and included an assignment for producing an actual assessment to be conducted in the classroom. During this follow-up, I asked the participants to reflect on and share their experiences with the assessment assignment they experienced with their students.

Carmen looked up, close to tears, frustration showing in her face and words. "I didn't want to come back here today. I feel like a complete failure," she said. "What makes it worse is I tried so hard."

She went on to complain about all her hard work trying to align the **curriculum** [what was to be taught] with the **assessment** [what the students would know and be able to do] and the **instruction** [the strategies used to help her students gain the knowledge needed to attain the skills and/or standard]. She was disappointed in her results and did not want to attend the follow-up because she feared failure.

These feelings are actually typical and have been expressed by many teachers returning to share the assessment assignment during the follow-up. So, what is the difficulty that these teachers are experiencing?

First, the whole training format is about change. A change in thinking about what matters in the classroom—not about changing everything a teacher is doing but about thinking through the assessment process of getting information back from the students and about becoming a better judge of whether students are really learning—not just if they are passing or failing.

This process format is difficult, so teachers need a strong support system. Unfortunately, some principals do not support changes in classroom assessment practices for teachers, nor do they know how to help them if a question or problem arises—so teachers may fear that they have failed. Conversely, teachers with supportive or knowledgeable principals can make great gains in assessment training. Another problem is that many teachers want things handed to them ready to use in the classroom, and they are overwhelmed when they must create an assessment that matches their curriculum and instruction. This alignment is what we refer to as the "big picture," and it is often paid little attention in classroom planning.

R&D On the Road

With Nancy McMunn

Over the FEAR of FAILURE

Carmen, like many teachers in this training, had never before created a rubric for scoring student work. "I'm afraid that this was a waste of my time," she said. "Although the failure rate decreased, many of my students' scores went down when I used my rubric. And I'm not even sure if this is a checklist or a rubric."

When I examined it, I noted that it was actually a combination of a checklist and a rubric, and it was a good start for the assignment. I asked her if the rubric measured student performance against noted benchmarks or objectives, and she said yes and that other skills were also measured.

"Don't worry about whether it's a checklist or rubric," I said. "Just think of it as a **feedback tool** because feedback is what it should be used for in the classroom. Good feedback is the key to improving student performance."

I asked Carmen if she thought her expectations were clear, and wondered aloud whether the students had had time to 'buy in' to this new kind of feedback loop.

If educators care about children and truly believe that "all children can learn," they must think about the way children are assessed and know that assessment makes the difference between success and failure. Classroom assessments are measures of success or failure, and if the assessment methods are inadequately selected and not aligned to curriculum and instruction, then students are not as successful, and teachers become frustrated. Thus, both feel failure. This assessment process, similar to a feedback spiral, takes time to develop and use.

The next morning Carmen came into the workshop with a huge grin on her face. "Last night I was thinking about our discussion and about some of the questions that came up in our review session, and it was like a light bulb suddenly turned on in my head!" she exclaimed. "I realized that my rubric—sorry, feedback tool—did not measure what I thought it did, and now I know why my students did not do well on this activity."

Carmen saw that the benchmarks were not measured at all, and only specific details and skills were addressed. There was also a mismatch in what she expected students to do and what she actually assessed.

For many teachers, the first time creating a feedback tool is difficult and time consuming. Also, the hardest part is deciding what is valued in student work and putting this information into an organized format that provides students with feedback for improvement. ***If good feedback is not provided on the feedback tool, all the teacher needs to do is put a simple grade on the assessment.***

Some teachers may have good intentions when they create the feedback tool, but sometimes the expectations are not clear, or sometimes the student's name on the paper carries as much weight as attaining a benchmark. These

Continued on Page 15

If good feedback is not provided on the feedback tool, all the teacher needs to do is put a simple grade on the assessment.

HEAD & HEART

An Overview of SERVE's Research and

by
Wendy McColskey,
Nancy McMunn,
and Sara Thompson

"Learning is both reflective and active, verbal and nonverbal, concrete and abstract, head and heart."

– Bernice McCarthy, *Educational Leadership* (March 1997)

In discussions about how to improve education, we often hear debates about the definition of "good instruction." It needs to be

- active (rather than passive)
- relevant
- reflective of lifelong learning habits
- intellectually challenging

We are less likely to hear conversations about what constitutes good student assessment practices in the classroom. Most recent conversations about assessment have been about the need for more alternative or authentic assessment as a way to provide a variety of opportunities for students to succeed.

In aligning classroom assessment with revised state standards and the current vision of "good instruction," teachers need time to ask themselves and each other some important questions.

- What is the quality and purpose of the work I assign students?
- Are the criteria for task performance clear to students so that they know what I expect of them?
- Do I provide regular feedback to help students improve?
- Do I provide opportunities for students to self- and peer assess and learn from each other?

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Into Assessment

Development Assessment Project

- Am I using fair and justifiable grading practices?
- What is the impact of my assessment practices on student motivation?

Having opportunities to address such questions with peers is likely to increase teacher effectiveness and student motivation.

Because of the recognized need to include conversations about good classroom assessment in the professional development opportunities available to teachers, SERVE has committed to continued Research and Development work in this area. In 1993-1994, SERVE worked with the Laboratory Network Program (a collaborative effort of the ten regional labs) in the production and dissemination of a *Toolkit for Professional Developers in Alternative Assessment*. Subsequently, SERVE's efforts involved developing a *SERVE Assessment Module* (based on the Toolkit activities) that describes in detail instructional activities for use with teacher groups.

In 1995-1996, SERVE disseminated this resource via train-the-trainer workshops held across the six southeastern states, reaching over 300 participants. When surveyed, a significant number of participants expressed a lack of confidence in using these materials to work with teachers in their districts or schools. They seemed to feel that assessment was a sensitive and somewhat "personal" teaching issue and that they did not have the background knowledge and/or classroom experience in assessment to prepare them for the questions and issues that might arise. SERVE's conclusion was that sole reliance on a train-the-trainer approach to building classroom assessment capacity in the region was not the most effective use of our resources.

I could not have become an effective trainer with my prior knowledge in assessment. I think an effective trainer must be a practitioner, someone who has implemented—with success—this type of assessment process in the classroom.

I, and I believe I speak for most of the teachers who have become part of our assessment trainer network, had limited—if any—training in college in assessment. Most of our teacher training focused on instructional activities but failed to prepare us for assessing them or making sure the activity aligned to the standard.

Training in assessment is not easy, especially training our peers. We must be able to draw from our experiences to give specific examples to other teachers during training; otherwise, we are seen as someone who thinks this might work, not someone who can assure us that it does work.

—Patricia Schenck, Bay District's Lead Trainer in Assessment

R&D Strategy

Establishing R&D Sites

In the spring of 1996, SERVE initiated a district demonstration site approach to building capacity that creates long-term partnerships with selected districts in the region. This Research and Development project is designed to examine how a district can implement a professional development process to increase teacher assessment capacity. SERVE's goal for the five-year period (1995–2000) is to establish partnerships with six districts in the Southeast (at least one district per southeastern state). These districts must express a commitment to the long-term process of helping teachers revise and rethink their assessment practices to match emerging national, state, and district standards.

The sites where SERVE is working are Bay County, Florida; McIntosh County, Georgia; Wake County, North Carolina; Mobile, Alabama; Crenshaw County, Alabama; Madison County, Alabama; Alcorn County, Mississippi; and Booneville, Mississippi. (In addition to these single district sites, SERVE is working with a consortium of districts in the Mississippi Delta area.)

Each district designed its own approach to professional development with the use of SERVE training and planning assistance. These districts will share their experiences and serve as resources for other districts interested in building strong professional development programs in classroom assessment.

Supporting Teacher Change

Many administrators agree that there is no shortage of workshops to attend on improving instruction and assessment. Although many educators participate in single-event training (e.g., on portfolios), few are getting the continuous (two- to three-year) focus on **quality** assessment practices. Stand-alone training in assessment inhibits teachers from thinking of assessment as a complex aspect of teaching that takes time to fully develop. Revising classroom assessments to match emerging district, state, and national standards is an individual process (which is long-term, evolutionary, and builds on previous experience).

It is important to constantly upgrade our assessment skills and stay connected to a support network of other assessment specialists to gain the knowledge we need. Also, I don't think of curriculum, assessment, and instruction as separate entities anymore, but view them with a systemic approach, that if changes are made in one part of the system, it requires thinking about and possibly making changes in other areas.

I have seen how much I and other teachers have grown over the past few years, but it has taken time. It has been worth the journey.

—Patricia Schenck, Bay District's Lead Trainer in Assessment

When new ideas are presented as "the answer," teachers are often skeptical and rarely accept them wholeheartedly. However, they generally are willing to start with small, incremental changes and, when they see success with students, begin to expand the focus of their improvement efforts.

In thinking about the order of the change process, research (Guskey, 1997) suggests that classroom practices which prove successful and enhance student learning lead to changes in teacher attitudes and beliefs. Many people mistakenly believe that teachers' philosophies and attitudes must change first. Experience suggests if teachers can be encouraged to try something new or different in a small way, and if teachers perceive a positive impact on students, they may have a **change of heart** and embrace the new ideas as sound and worthwhile.

For example, a teacher might start off experimenting with changes to assignments, from more factual questions to more higher-order thinking questions. Then because of the open-ended nature of these assignments, the teacher becomes aware of the importance of rubrics as instructional tools to help students understand the expectations for performance and the quality of responses expected. After realizing the instructional value of rubrics, the teacher might try involving students in generating rubrics which might lead to more peer and self-assessment opportunities for students. If this works well, the teacher might expand students' responsibilities even further by incorporating a portfolio or student-led parent conference into the classroom, which in turn leads to questions about the meaning of grades.

And so it goes. Thoughtful assessment changes often lead to more motivated and successful students which lead to ideas for more changes and finally to the articulation of an educational philosophy about the purposes of assessment and how it works best for children.

Rethinking assessment in the classroom is an ongoing, continuous improvement process that because of the daily stresses of teaching may not happen without district and school-based support. Assessment changes can drive teaching and learning in new directions, but the organizational support for the hard work at the individual teacher level must be there.

SERVE & Districts

The Benefits of Partnerships

Many district offices are overworked and have little time to "develop" training activities and materials for teachers in the area of assessment. SERVE has developed a four-day professional development program for the first year of work with the district to help teachers look at the quality of classroom assessment practices. This program provides a starting point for teachers in rethinking how they assess their students. The goal of this initial four-day program is to walk teachers through the process of developing a performance assessment matched to district or state standards so that they experience the impact on students and, thus, become motivated to continue their growth in this area.

- For the first year, the first two days include hands-on, awareness activities (see Assessment Training Agenda on the following page) that help teachers experience the range of assessment methods and the process of assessment design, develop a common language for assessment, and understand the relationship between student motivation and assessment. Teachers are also introduced to the concept of rubrics and the importance of letting students know the expected criteria "up front."

- At the end of the initial two days, teachers are charged with developing and piloting a performance task and collecting samples of student work to bring to the next meeting.

- During the subsequent two days, teachers "present" their assessment results and analyze what they learned from doing the assessment with students. They critique and revise their assessment and explore other emerging professional development needs.

- This experiential training program is the heart of SERVE's first-year collaboration with districts. Although the training is the same, each district plans for how it will be implemented based on district needs (which schools, which teachers, etc.).

- District goals for subsequent years evolve from the experiences/reactions/needs of participating teachers and schools.

- The district demonstration sites agree to have a district-wide planning team and to name a district liaison/project leader. SERVE offers training resources and materials, but the leadership and commitment to ongoing

teacher support must come from the district. The district also agrees to a two- to three-year commitment to a professional development focus on classroom assessment. The long-term goal is to foster district expertise and leadership so that building teacher capacity in assessment becomes a continuing district programmatic priority. The professional development program is jointly developed by SERVE and the district.

Assessment Training Agenda

Four Days' Topics	*Activities Include*	*Focus of Activity*
PHASE ONE: **Why and What in Alternative Assessment**	♥ Ira Sleeps Over ♥ Rudy ♥ Speaking the Same Language	♥ Change and what we face ♥ Good pictures of our students ♥ Assessment vocabulary through examples and sharing
PHASE TWO: **Do Teachers Communicate What is Valued in Student Learning?**	♥ Clapping Hands ♥ Model of a Talented Teacher ♥ Camping Trip ♥ A Closer Look at Rubrics	♥ Performance assessment ♥ Kay Toliver's video on motivation, integration, and authentic assessment ♥ Deciding what is valued and creating a rubric ♥ Samples of different types of rubrics
PHASE THREE: **Exploration of Good Assessment Design**	♥ Bloom/Multiple Intelligences Revisited—Spectrum of Assessment ♥ Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Alignment Review and Assignment	♥ Bloom's taxonomy and connections to multiple intelligences ♥ Review of state standards and assignment for returning session
PHASE FOUR: **(Two-Day) Returning Session**	♥ Positive/Negative Reflections ♥ Hard/Soft Thinking ♥ Sharing Our Success ♥ Building Our Barn	♥ Good/bad aspects of assignment and implementation for students and teachers ♥ Types of thinkers ♥ What happened in the classroom ♥ Where from here?

- Finally, the district demonstration sites agree to share what they learn with other districts. SERVE is collecting data on district strategies and on impact of the program on classroom practices. These data will be shared with the region. Teachers and administrators from these sites also serve as trainers and consultants for other sites. Our goal is to create a network of capable teachers from each of our six southeastern states who are knowledgeable in quality assessment methods, are available to provide training to others in their states, and can advise SERVE on continuing needs in classroom assessment.

First-Year Reflections

Two of SERVE's district demonstration sites are now in their second year. Bay District Schools in Panama City, Florida, was the first site established, closely followed by Alcorn County, Mississippi. Both districts have moved quickly to build a strong program in professional development, supported by outside grants. In the process, the districts have learned some lessons which can be of value to other districts who recognize that classroom assessment is a weak link but who have not yet made it a district priority.

What SERVE Learned

1. **Someone must be in charge.**
   A district staff person or project leader must be responsible for directing the effort given all the competing demands for teacher time, if quality classroom assessment is to become an active part of a district's professional development program. This person must truly understand the role of classroom assessment in helping students achieve and take an active leadership role in planning, implementing, and evaluating the strategies used to support teachers' development.

2. **Teacher training must start at a basic level.**
   One benefit of the basic training is to provide teachers with a common language. Since most teachers have not had coursework in assessment, the training serves to establish a common language. A common language helps teachers articulate problems they have had with assessment and, on the flip side, helps other teachers articulate their successes and feel affirmed in what they have been doing. At the school level, a common knowledge base and language allows teachers to share ideas with each other and compare notes on assessment practices.

3. **Assessment, like instruction, is best thought of as a continual improvement process.**
   Reflecting on assessment practices is a slow process. Just developing and implementing one complex assessment task can take hours of teacher time. The process cannot be rushed. Trying to change too much at one time can lead to discouragement. Thus, training in assessment must be job-embedded, supported, and long-term. Requiring all teachers as part of their first-year training to develop a useable, defensible assessment for their classroom in a supportive-group context is a first small step toward initiating teachers into the continual improvement process.

4. **Principals, as well as district personnel, must take a leadership role in promoting professional development in assessment.**
   These educators must also commit to becoming knowledgeable about quality classroom assessment, so that they can participate and support schoolwide discussions and activities. They can provide time and support to teachers, and can increase the focus on assessment practices by encouraging school improvement goals in this area. For example, a school goal might be that all teachers will develop at least one new performance assessment during the year. Another school may have as its goal the development of common rubrics for writing and speaking skills across discipline areas.

5. **School leaders need to listen to what teachers are saying about needs, insecurities, and barriers.**
   For example, in the early stages of change, teachers often express a need for individualized feedback from a consultant or other teacher experts on some of the assessment changes they are trying in their classroom. (Good feedback is an important part of the

improvement process—with teachers as well as with students.) They often express a desire to work with a partner or in a group with other teachers for this reason. School leaders can respond to and support these needs if they are "listening" well.

6. **A successful assessment initiative begins with motivated, enthusiastic teachers.** Allowing teachers to choose to participate is critical. Forcing participation is not likely to work until the program has advocates, like a strong support team established at the school. Successful districts have portrayed the initial assessment training as a valuable commodity for which schools must show interest, go through an application process, and make a long-term commitment. As volunteer, "pilot" teachers go through the first-year training process and begin to get excited about the potential impact of assessment changes on their students' motivation, word gets out and others become interested. As the interest grows, the district must find grants or other funds to expand opportunities for professional development both in breadth (numbers) and in depth (beyond first-year training).

Why the Effort? Student Success!

For the last six years, there have been national, state, and district movements toward defining new standards for student performance. The higher standards or "new basics" that are needed to prepare students for work in the twenty-first century emphasize high-level thinking and application skills such as

- Proficiency in reading for information, summarizing key points, and critically interpreting what is read
- Applying basic math skills to real-life situations, problem-solving, and communicating math understanding
- Organizing what is known, defending and justifying recommendations, and searching out and learning new information about an issue
- Working together as a team to solve problems or complete a task

The articulation of these higher standards demands a different kind of assessment process. Traditional tests that depend heavily on factual recall are important, but they are only one of many kinds of assessment instruments. Districts that take new state and national standards seriously realize that extensive, job-embedded staff development is needed in order for teachers to understand these standards, explore the instructional and assessment implications for the classroom, and experiment with the alignment process.

Ultimately, the goal of the SERVE project is to improve learning for students. The feedback SERVE is beginning to receive from participating teachers is that they are articulating higher student expectations, and students are meeting the higher demands. Teachers also report paying more attention to decisions about curriculum and instructional alignment. Here are some comments received from teachers in Bay District Schools:

Since I began using alternative assessment and especially the rubrics, the results that I have seen are unbelievable as far as how well the students can write. To be honest, I really did not know how well second-grade students could write until we adopted the writing rubric this year. It has raised my expectations of what they can do. It has been the same for other teachers. We see our students become so involved in writing and what makes good writing.

The quality and quantity of the writing in my class has risen dramatically this year, since we began using alternative assessments, especially the writing rubrics. Students in my third grade have become so familiar with the rubric that they have become good editors of their own writing. This monitoring of their

Continued from Page 7 — *On the Road With Nancy McMunn: We Never Get Over the Fear of Failure*

are major problems to overcome when creating a good feedback tool, but if used properly, the tool can place the responsibility for learning back on the student and be used as an accountability measure for the classroom teacher.

After the training session was complete, I was alone in the training room packing my materials when Carmen returned and said, "I want to talk to you." I felt—as teachers sometimes do when parents or students want to talk—that I had done something wrong.

"I came to this session feeling angry and inferior. Mostly, I was afraid I had failed my assignment. But when you said that 'we are here to learn from each other and discover what we need to improve upon,' I knew it was going to be okay after all. I realized that you weren't going to judge me based on how well I had done my assignment; you were going to help me to discover what I needed to do to reach a standard of quality work. **I could do that if given enough time and practice. I learned that I need to be utilizing this approach with my own students!"**

"In fact," she continued, "now that I've had time to reflect, I want to thank you because this was the best training I have received in 25 years of teaching! It has made me think, act, and improve on my classroom practices, and this will directly impact the success of my students."

It is clear from the evaluations of this training and the comments from many teachers that this process has positively affected what they do and how they plan for assessing their students and that it is worth the time and energy spent. In promoting quality training for teachers, it is important that staff developers reflect and model for teachers the kind of learning environment we want exhibited in the classroom. In other words, instead of filling heads with just knowledge, we should help teachers to become good consumers of that knowledge. I am convinced that assessment training—or any teacher training—must be about learning—not success or failure. It must done in small steps in order to promote a change in ***heart*** *and attitude about what is important. Teachers must think about what they do and how those things impact student learning before any change in classroom behavior occurs.*

Carmen, like many of the teachers I work with, has taken the first step toward increasing her assessment capacity, and the changes she makes over time will positively impact student learning. ●

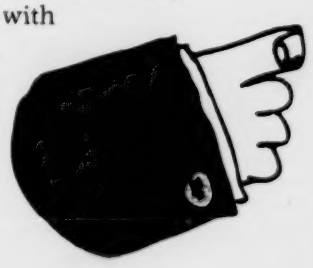
own work is something I had never seen before. Before, students waited for me to give the grade; now, they review and revise their own work before I see it.

I think we are beginning to see our students 'buy in' to their work. They are becoming better self-assessors and evaluators.

For the first time I was able to see that students will work to high expectations if they know what is expected of them. The student learning has been unbelievable!

With this training I have begun looking at what I have taught before in a new light. I now think about how a particular unit, topic, or activity fits within the curriculum and whether the time spent is truly worth my students' and my time. I did not have the training before to reflect on these ideas.

SERVE values the work of districts currently involved in helping teachers with their changes in assessment. Bay District Schools in Panama City, Florida, our first partner site, offers a window into the change process. Their story unfolds on the following pages. ●



Creating a Hotspot of Activity

The District Perspective

Information for Bay District
submitted by
Beth Deluzain
and
Patricia Schenck

No new initiative starts in a vacuum.

State and national policies and movements have impacted this district's interest in the role of classroom assessment. Many of the schools in Bay District have been trained in the use of Onward to Excellence (a school improvement planning process) and had some experience in assessing needs and developing school goals. The state of Florida established standards for what it expects students to know and be able to do.

These documents encouraged districts to take a broader look at student outcomes and explore the degree to which higher-level thinking skills such as problem-solving were being developed. The appearance of standards on the state and national scene led Bay District to ask three questions:

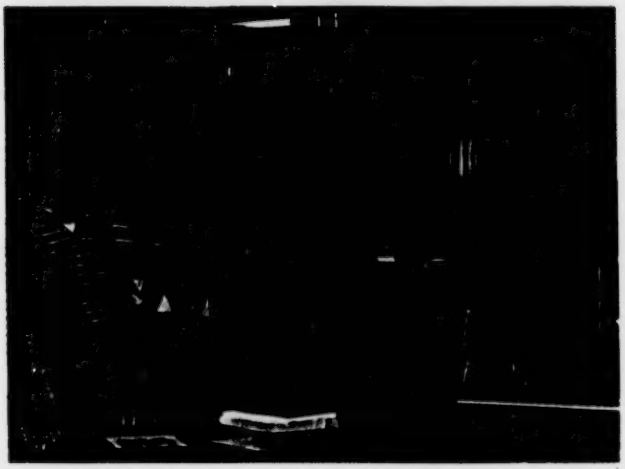
- What do we want our students to know and to be able to do?
- How can we help them learn it?
- How will we know when they have learned it?

Identifying Training

Our First Step!

A district faced with helping teachers explore and teach to new state standards and assessments has a variety of options for proceeding. Some districts establish districtwide committees to develop district standards and assessments based on national and state materials. Others start small with teachers exploring implications for their classrooms. Bay District chose this latter route. They applied for Goals 2000 funds from the state to start working with a small group of teachers on assessments matched to national standards.

The major goal of this project (called the TARGET project) was to develop teacher capacity to design and implement quality assessment methods which



would allow them to measure student learning while meeting designated educational benchmarks. The hope was that teachers who participated in this project would increase their knowledge of the full range of traditional and alternative assessment techniques and would sharpen their skills in matching assessment purposes and methods.

Project Design

Bay District invited each school in the district to submit a proposal to be included in the TARGET PROJECT. Beth Deluzain, Resource Teacher and TARGET PROJECT manager, said, "We have discovered that this application process affirms the commitment of the school to participate fully in the project and have since adopted this model for almost every program we use."

The schools who applied and were selected subsequently chose teams of volunteer teachers who agreed to develop, implement, and revise at least one alternative assessment tool for use in their classrooms during the school year. SERVE provided four days of assessment training to over 80 teachers and administrators from the schools selected.

Bay District Schools

Panama City, Florida

27,000 Students

1,700 Teachers

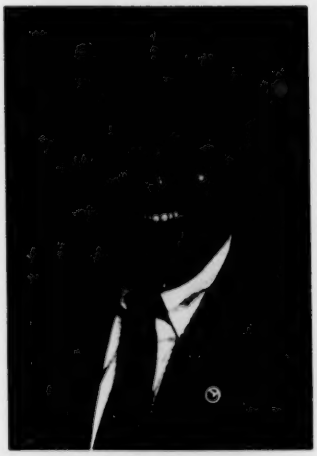
85 Administrators

20 Elementary Schools

7 Middle Schools

4 High Schools
(IB, AP, and AICE programs)

Major Industry:
Tourism, Military



Superintendent:
Larry Bolinger

In Bay District, we are committed to improving learning in our district and to becoming more accountable to our community. The district, however, is also accountable to teachers—to ensure that they have the support they need to set expectations and to assess student performance.

—Larry Bolinger, Superintendent

At the end of two days of training (winter, 1996), teachers left the workshop with a single assignment—develop ONE assessment instrument. The TARGET PROJECT manager attended all of the training to answer questions from project participants and to reinforce that producing sample assessments was a condition of receiving the funding from the district (for which the schools had applied). Thus, district leadership was visible and accessible during the training process, showing the district's commitment to this effort.

Teachers brought their assessments and student work samples to the two-day, follow-up workshop in the spring (1996). During this session, teachers critiqued each other's work, using quality assessment criteria which included considerations of validity, reliability, and practicality.

The response from teachers was overwhelming. The "customized" training that SERVE provided allowed teachers to practice what they had learned. While it became clear to teachers that good assessments evolve over time, almost every participant was convinced of the value of a well-crafted assessment instrument carefully aligned to the curriculum.

Comments ranging from, "My kids' projects were ten times better after we worked out the rubric," to "Every teacher in the district should have this training," convinced Bay District that they had discovered a powerful route to improving student learning. Finding a job-embedded assessment training program that worked for teachers was an important first step.

We believe that all children can learn and all children can learn more—if we do our part to show what success looks like. Our participation in the SERVE R&D project is giving teachers the information they need to make learning targets clear and to assess progress toward those targets.
—Larry Bolinger, Superintendent

Managing and Expanding the Professional Development Program

The district continued to secure State grants, for 1996-1997 and 1997-1998 school years, to expand the assessment training efforts. In addition to the original group of 80+ teachers, a second group of 80 teachers from 11 schools went through the four-day training program in 1996-1997. Because of the value of the training in establishing a common language and level of awareness, the goal of providing such training to all of the district's 1400+ teachers was articulated.

In 1997-1998, Goals 2000 funds will allow for all teachers in the district to receive the four days of training. The district clearly is sending a message that good classroom assessment matched to national and state standards is an important professional growth area for teachers.

A training program of this magnitude clearly required more trainers than SERVE could provide. Capacity for providing the four-day training had to be developed. In addition, within the district, mentors were needed at each school to support new teachers coming on board with assessment development.

As a result, a "train-the-trainers" program was implemented using selected teachers from the original pilot groups. With teams in place in every school to serve as mentors and coaches, the next step will be to train the 1,400 other teachers in the district during the 1997-1998 and 1998-1999 school years.

Plans for these two years will include staff development in two parts. Every teacher will attend a four-day workshop called "Connections" which focuses on the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and

assessment using Florida's goals and the newly published Sunshine State Standards in seven major subjects. As a follow-up, all teachers not previously trained will attend the TARGET Quality Assessment program (developed by SERVE) summarized above. Thus, over the next two years, all teachers in the district will be well-versed in standards-based reform for the classroom.

Realizing that school administrators must be prepared to support teachers' efforts to teach to and assess state standards, the district held a summit conference for all principals in the spring of 1997 to introduce the "Connections" and "TARGET Quality Assessment Program" training efforts and to discuss the rationale and need for such a comprehensive effort.

The district continues its exploration of ways to support and provide incentives for teachers to upgrade their assessment practices. A large grant was obtained to develop a database of the assessments that teachers are developing through the four-day training process, thus making sample assessments available to teachers in the future.

In addition, the district is partnering with SERVE to develop a certification process that will provide incentives for teachers to continue to improve their assessment knowledge and expertise. Teachers will engage in a performance-based program with the highest achievement at the level of "master trainer."

As part of the consideration of ongoing professional development needs in assessment, the district is considering what the second level of training for teachers (beyond awareness) might be. SERVE is working to develop a second level of training that will include considerations of grading and reporting issues and the relationship of assessment practices to student motivation. This second level of training will likely be piloted in Bay District in the summer of 1998.

Advice to Other Districts

To other districts that may want to follow this road of aligning classroom assessment to emerging state and national standards through an intensive professional development program, Bay District offers these recommendations:

- Provide a vision which emphasizes improvement in student learning as the only kind of meaningful school improvement.
- Encourage all school leaders to attend training with their teachers with the expectation that they will support teacher growth.
- Create a small cadre of assessment experts in each school before embarking on large-scale training in order to provide a mechanism for ongoing support.
- Focus on flexibility and responsiveness. Staff development programs should meet the needs of the participants; the participants should not meet the needs of the program.
- Involve participants in planning and make adaptations to training as needed.
- Invite teacher input into long-range staff development. Listen to teachers and provide training they request to help them teach effectively.
- Include a staff development component requiring classroom application and follow-up activities.
- Work to obtain outside grant funds as a way of providing the training and support teachers need to rethink assessment practices. Outside grant funds also serve to build visibility and acceptance for the effort. ●

For more information on this district's approach to professional development in assessment, please contact:

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Life Within the Hotspot

The School and Teacher Perspective

by

Wendy McColskey

and

Nancy McMunn

"...Risks will be taken. This means freedom: freedom to try and fail, freedom to be different, and, ultimately, freedom to succeed."

—Kathy Davis, Patronis Project Coordinator

The district may be a catalyst for teacher involvement in reflecting on assessment practices, but ultimately the knowledge gained in districtwide professional development must be accepted and supported within the walls of each individual school. The principal, school leadership team, and school culture must support new ways of thinking about assessment if the assessment process is to continue and gain momentum.

Bay County identified three pilot schools to work with SERVE in implementing the process of school change related to classroom assessment practices: Rutherford High School, Rosenwald Middle School, and Patronis Elementary School. Faculties there understood the need to rethink and align classroom assessment to state standards. In addition, these schools were willing to serve as demonstration sites for the district and share what they learned with other schools.

To get baseline data on how teachers in schools viewed classroom assessment, SERVE staff collected and analyzed interview and survey data from teachers at the three schools in the spring of 1996. Below, we suggest a number of questions schools might ask themselves, and we describe the baseline data at the three schools to illustrate possible answers. These questions represent areas in which we would expect to see growth at the pilot schools. In other words, if we ask the same questions of the pilot schools at the end of three years, we expect the answers to reflect positive change.

Are there ongoing efforts to clarify, articulate, and assess desired student outcomes?

Our baseline interviews revealed that at Patronis Elementary, some consensus and coordination about outcomes had been achieved among first-grade teachers as a result of rethinking the report card format. Other grade levels had done little consensus building around key outcomes.

Because the middle school was organized into cross-disciplinary teams, teachers in the same subject areas had little time to work together. For example, the school's science teachers met for the

purpose of purchasing and coordinating but had not collaborated on student outcomes across different grade levels.

Some middle school teachers expressed concern about what their students needed to know in order to perform successfully in high school. They stated:

High school teachers talk about middle school students and how they are not ready for high school. Some of the things we're questioning is how we know whether students are ready for high school, and do we know what "ready" means. What difference does ready make if they can only be retained once in middle school years? Ready or not, they are passed on.

At the high school, some departments had started to talk through state standards while others had not. An English teacher offered:

When I came here, we had these huge curriculum guides that specified exactly what would be taught and at which level. There was little room for innovation. I've not seen a curriculum guide in years. A problem that we have is that if I decide to teach a book, someone may have taught it in previous years. Of course, the kids don't want to read it again, so we have problems with continuity.

Thus, the move by the state to lessen specificity in content standards means more responsibility for teachers in terms of articulating curriculum and assessment.

Conclusion: The beginning point for any good assessment is clarity on the target behaviors, skills, knowledge, or attitudes that teachers are teaching. Without good articulation vertically (among teachers at different levels of a discipline) and horizontally (among teachers of different disciplines), student assessments will represent a somewhat unfocused set of skills and objectives.

Does the school schedule/structure/culture promote collaborative assessment development and sharing/critiquing of assessment tasks?

Prior to the SERVE project, none of the schools had expectations that teachers would share assessments and discuss grading standards. However, all schools had pockets of collaboration.

At the elementary school, several kindergarten and first grade teachers were developing performance assessments in math and science as part of a grant they had obtained.

At the middle school, an intensive schoolwide effort at implementing writing rubrics across the curriculum existed. Thus, the English teachers had received some training in assessment. Teacher teams were also encouraged to work together to develop interdisciplinary units.

At the high school, the math teachers had developed an activity notebook for which everyone contributed ideas. These ideas were instructional activities, however, not assessments. The Health Occupations and Technology Communication teams had worked together on project-based assessments.

Conclusion: Since assessments are at least as important as instruction in terms of directing students toward expected knowledge, skills, attitudes, etc., then teachers need opportunities to coordinate and work together on how significant benchmark performances might be assessed and share results on how students perform on such assessments.

Is there administrative support/teacher leadership for a long-term, well-conceptualized, professional development program in assessment?

Prior to the SERVE project, at the elementary and high school levels, there had been no systematic planning to address teachers' professional development needs in assessment. As a part of school improvement initiatives, the middle school demonstrated support for teacher development in assessment through training on writing assessment, interdisciplinary projects, and electronic portfolios.

Conclusion: Most schools will have teachers using assessment methods ranging from very traditional (multiple choice, true/false, etc.) to very alternative (portfolios, open-ended, performance, etc.). One

question that needs to be addressed is whether all faculty need to be exposed to a basic level of assessment training, mainly for the purpose of developing a common language about the issues and needs. How such training should be delivered is a big question at a large high school. After this training, what should be the next step? What are the goals? To answer these questions, it is helpful to develop a formal or informal teacher/administrator group to lead the effort and plan the steps. These teacher leaders can also serve as mentors to other teachers interested in developing new ways to assess students.

Other important questions include

- Are rubrics for important cross-curriculum outcomes (writing, speaking, reading for information, research skills, working in teams, defending and justifying opinions) shared and discussed among teachers for maximum student impact?
- Is self-assessment and peer assessment an important part of the instructional program?
- Is grading and reporting a way of motivating students and helping them to improve, or is it simply a system for sorting students into winners and losers?

One concern school leaders may have in thinking about a schoolwide professional development effort in assessment is that teachers will be resistant to new assessment ideas. Our baseline data suggests that although there were a few teachers who were resistant to considering new ideas, most were open and hungry for more information, shared conversations, examples, and opportunities to develop new assessments. The comments below represent some of their initial thoughts:

This is my first year, and at college, they talked a lot about authentic assessment. But to put it into practice is totally different. I've gone more traditional this year because it's been so hard.

I liked the idea of rubrics, but I'm not sure about how we go about developing them, and I can't find a book that has them already made for me.

If you could provide rubrics for us and get us to a point that we understand and are comfortable with it, then we're fine. But we don't want people to think that what we're doing is just a whim—that it's just the latest thing. We don't want assessment to be a fad.

Ideally, alternative assessment will help students assume the responsibility for their own learning. A student who learns to use critical thinking, problem-solving, and self-reflection to improve him or herself will be on the road to becoming a lifelong learner.

The alternative methods I have tried have had a positive impact on my classroom in that my students were more excited. However, I still need practice in working with alternative methods.

I know very little about alternative assessment. I'd like to see the school go to something other than what I'm currently doing which is 20% graded homework and 80% tests.

For more specific information about teachers' interests, SERVE developed a survey. The data showed a high percentage of teachers at all schools were interested in more information about assessment, but there were variations among schools. Thus, our approach has been to work with each school to define the training and other professional development opportunities needed.

Looking over the data, readers may draw the following conclusions:

- The middle school teachers had a greater understanding of the assessment items listed reflecting their higher level of previous training.
- The knowledge and use of rubrics at the elementary and high schools was minimal prior to the SERVE project.
- More than half of all teachers reported "less than full understanding" of the terms *standards* and *benchmarks*.

In the section that follows, administrators and teachers at the three schools describe their progress and perceptions.

Baseline Data From Three Schools
May 1998

Column A

Percent of teachers who report *"less than fully understand"*

Column B

Percent of teachers who report *"using successfully"*

Category	Patronis		Rosenwald		Rutherford	
METHODS	A	B	A	B	A	B
Notebooks	74%	11%	10%	33%	23%	47%
Performance Tasks	70%	19%	33%	33%	28%	43%
Observations	45%	19%	18%	38%	34%	34%
Videos	66%	11%	27%	24%	34%	39%
Cooperative Groupwork	39%	32%	18%	43%	37%	37%
Exhibitions/Projects	47%	40%	27%	40%	36%	35%
Open-ended Questions	55%	17%	59%	29%	42%	32%
Debates/Skits/Oral Performances	63%	14%	27%	20%	44%	21%
Graphic Organizers	68%	14%	23%	43%	45%	25%
Logs/Journals	50%	19%	23%	24%	46%	24%
Portfolios	55%	22%	5%	29%	50%	18%
Interviews	74%	14%	41%	20%	53%	13%
Anecdotal Records	71%	11%	50%	14%	67%	11%
Rubrics	84%	11%	24%	38%	77%	17%
Critiques of student work samples	89%	3%	39%	14%	67%	18%
Peer feedback	78%	3%	29%	29%	60%	16%
Student self-assessment	78%	9%	24%	19%	58%	17%
Student-led parent conferences	86%	0%	62%	14%	82%	4%
Standards/benchmarks	78%	9%	57%	14%	63%	27%

Patronis Elementary School

Information submitted by

Janice Salares
Principal

Kathy Davis
Project Director

Patronis Elementary is one of the newer schools in the Bay District school system. When the school opened two years ago, many Patronis teachers came with a belief that they would have the opportunity to try new ideas and that innovative practice would be encouraged.

The summer prior to the school's opening, several teachers met to write a grant supporting the development of alternative assessments in mathematics and science. These teachers were already well on their way to becoming the school experts before the district began its assessment training efforts.

Rosenwald Middle School

Information submitted by

Lynn Hobby
Assistant Principal

Eddie Comerford
Principal

Lee Ann Mann
Faculty Member

Middle School can be a particularly challenging time for both students and teachers. Across the nation, grades six through eight have probably undergone the most recent and rigorous restructuring in recent years. Educators of this age group are constantly searching for "whatever works" with middle school students.

Rosenwald Middle School in Bay District began an improvement process in the 1992-93 school year. Led by Principal Joe Comerford and Lynn Hobby, Assistant Principal, Rosenwald parents and

Rutherford High School

Information submitted by

Sandy Wilson
Faculty Member

Jimmie Brindley
Assistant Principal

High school curriculum, instruction, and scheduling are currently undergoing intensive scrutiny in America's public schools. Innovative teachers and administrators are looking at new ways to deliver a meaningful and relevant education to those students who will soon be part of the "real world." Sometimes high school students feel their high school education has little to do with their chosen career goals or their future lives. Rutherford High School realized this and decided to work together to change students' perceptions.

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PERCEPTIONS

When the school applied and was accepted for the districtwide Target assessment training, these four teachers were selected by the school to participate and continued their experimenting with assessment at the kindergarten and first-grade level. They were developing integrated thematic curriculum units with accompanying assessments. However, there was little activity in curriculum and assessment alignment beyond these four teachers.

Subsequently, when SERVE became involved, working with curriculum and assessment redesign assumed an aura of authenticity.

"Working with a nationally linked organization gave credence to the project," said Kathy Davis, Patronis project coordinator. "Additionally, principals appreciate recognition for their schools, and collaboration with SERVE validated what we were doing and gave the administration a green light to move forward with assessment change. One of the most beneficial aspects of being part of a recognized R&D project is the acceptance that risks will be taken. This means freedom; freedom to try and fail, freedom to be different, and, ultimately, freedom to succeed."

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faculty elected to devote the next three-to-five years improving student performance in writing.

After the goal was identified, every faculty member participated in committees that reviewed effective schools research to select methods and techniques to achieve the goal. As part of this improvement process, the Rosenwald faculty embraced the philosophy of preparing students for the real world of work and the 21st century. To do this, teachers needed to learn more about authentic, performance-based alternative assessment methods.

"We were thrilled last spring to be invited to be a part of the SERVE R&D project," said Hobby. "This project provided us with the perfect answer to a very scary question: How do we learn all we need to know about alternative assessment?"

With Ernest Spiva, the Rutherford High School principal who was willing to explore options and to allow faculty to experiment, Rutherford's Accountability Team established the following mission statement:

The RHS community is boldly committed to develop proactive, successful young citizens through interdisciplinary educational experiences. We believe each student is a sacred trust who can attain maximum growth and develop full potential by becoming

ESPONSIBLE
DAPTABLE
ATURE
ELF-SUFFICIENT
(NOTE This spells , their symbol)

The RHS faculty produced a twenty-seven point improvement plan. Points centered around reexamining the school schedule, the curriculum model, and the delivery method of that curriculum. Rutherford adopted a block scheduling plan that significantly altered the school day and school week. They also implemented a curriculum model

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Patronis Elementary School

School Progress

When the school was selected as a SERVE pilot site for the district, we received four days of assessment training for the entire faculty, making it the first school in the district to be totally on board with the basic level of assessment training. The training served to help all 52 staff members become aware of the issues, develop a common language, and become more collaborative in their assessment work.

At the end of the first project year with SERVE, the faculty began to consider schoolwide curriculum and assessment redesign. They considered the

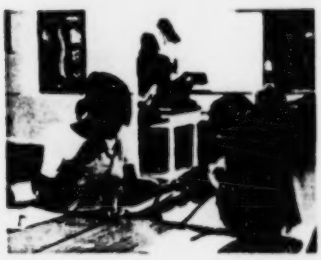
Rosenwald Middle School

School Progress

To date, most of the faculty have participated in the four days of SERVE training and worked in teams to develop a thematic unit. They worked to create assessment rubrics and implemented the integrated unit in their classrooms.

Lee Ann Mann, an eighth-grade teacher at Rosenwald and now a resource teacher (Title I Reading Teacher) who will be working with other teachers in the school on curriculum and assessment issues, elaborated on the process from her own perspective.

Rutherford High School



for all students called Personal Education Plans (PEP). Students now select a course of study centered around their career goals.

As teachers restructured and integrated the curriculum, they realized that the old testing methods were ineffective preparation for the 21st-century workplace. Employers need workers who can produce, communicate, and perform in ways that traditional tests cannot begin to measure.

PERCEPTIONS

possibility of developing a seamless spiraling curriculum for kindergarten through fifth grade and realized the need for the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Many of the instructional staff are devising performance tasks and using rubrics to give specific feedback to parents and students.

Change is a long-term process and does not occur without some resistance. Administrators must expect resistance and continue to support the process of change professionally, philosophically, and financially.

"Restructuring through schoolwide redesign will not occur unless teachers become change agents," said Janice Salares, Patronis principal. "Teachers are the most powerful change agents in the educational process, and restructuring truly occurs as a result of teacher empowerment."

Teacher teams have written grant proposals and obtained $111,000 in grants to assist the school in moving to more authentic assessment.

Hands-on learning, authentic activities, and performance assessments require different kinds

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As a group we're used to change, and many of us embrace it. In the past ten years, we've gone from a departmentalized junior high to a middle school that uses interdisciplinary team teaching. The alternative assessment training and ensuing project offered by SERVE seemed a natural progression in our continuous efforts to improve student performance and upgrade our teaching skills. Granted, change is not always easy, but it is something we have come to expect at our school, knowing we want to see continued student improvement.

This type of assessment takes time to create. The activity must be planned to support specific benchmarks and still be as student-oriented as possible with a real purpose and audience. Then the assessment instrument must be created and refined. While the initial work is time-consuming, once devised, it can be reused and, we hope, shared with others.

Bottom line? Is it worth it? Will it help to prepare our students for the future? To my way of thinking, the best thing we can do for our students is

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School Progress

To provide our faculty with the skills and knowledge necessary to be effective in quality, authentic assessment, it became apparent that we would need professional help. As part of our SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) renewal process, we identified assessment as the major focus of our staff development.

When the opportunity came to be a part of the SERVE project, Rutherford was at the right point in time. A core group of 12 teachers went through the four days of training with SERVE with the understanding that this group would serve as trainers for the rest of the faculty (130-member staff).

The team subsequently spent 4-to-5 days over the course of the 1996-1997 school year planning for how they would begin to work with the entire faculty in the upcoming school year (1997-1998). The team discussed a wide range of issues in the planning process including the relationship of this professional development effort to others already ongoing and to school improvement efforts, the possible barriers that

Patronis Elementary School

of equipment and supplies than found in traditional classrooms. School administrators understood this and provided flexibility in budgeting school dollars. Creating time for teachers to plan, confer, and assess also requires money, and the SERVE Research and Development initiative allowed Patronis to focus on these areas.

Now, teachers are talking about assessment issues, becoming curriculum inventors, sharing and critiquing rubrics as a way of making expectations for students clearer, and developing leadership skills. Our goals for 1997-1998 include the creation of the Patronis Elementary Integrated Curriculum

Rosenwald Middle School

provide them with educational experiences that are real or as true to life as possible.

The SERVE R&D project has created a strong interest in alternative assessments and provided the faculty with the tools and confidence they need to provide students with quality alternative assessments. During the 1997-1998 school year, Rosenwald is developing plans for where it wants to go with its schoolwide assessment efforts. An Assessment Committee was formed and initially met with the School Improvement Team. The

Rutherford High School

might emerge, and the most effective ways to utilize the talents of the group in providing an inviting culture for change.

The team decided that when training was initiated for all staff in 1997-1998, all the faculty would be assigned to small teams and that each "trained" core team member would become a small-group mentor or support facilitator as the teachers took on the responsibility of developing a performance assessment for their classroom.

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PERCEPTIONS

Matrix (K-5 alignment with Sunshine State Standards and Goal 3 Standards), giving teachers time to work on writing and revising rubrics and working on schoolwide rubrics, giving grade-levels time to work together, and looking at how rubric scores are used in our current reporting methods.

A Patronis teacher reflects:
This project has impacted student learning in many ways. As a result of this project, we have been able to shift our focus from teaching to learning. We have gotten rid of the "cute" activities and opted for materials that are meaningful for the students and prepare students for assessment of the standards/benchmarks. We have been able to think of what long-range goals we want our children to accomplish, rather than just planning for the next day. We have done this by developing themes and authentic assessments for each nine-week period. This has helped us to focus on where it is that we are taking our students. Rubrics have also impacted the students' learning. With the use of rubrics, we have been able to raise the standard for student achievement. Students know ahead of time what is expected of them, and they, in turn, can rise to meet our expectations.

Assessment Committee now plans to meet twice a month to develop strategies to support teachers' professional development needs in assessment.

During 1996-1997, the core team worked on assessment ideas in their classrooms. By building a successful battery of authentic, quality assessments that have been tried by these core members, we are establishing the solid foundation for presentation to the rest of the faculty.

The 1997-1998 training is not built on rhetoric but on actual practice in eight different subject areas. We have the materials and expertise to share with the faculty in a non-threatening, invitational approach and the practitioners to go back to in a pinch when the newly trained faculty have questions.

The students involved in the assessments developed by the core team have been very positive in their response. Recognition of student strengths and respect from teachers and peers leads to increased student performance and personal satisfaction. This type of student growth is the focus of our school improvement efforts, our staff development initiatives, our accreditation process, and our SERVE project.

Patronis Elementary School

Michael Dunnivant

Jennifer Loescher

Two Patronis first-grade teachers, Michael Dunnivant and Jennifer Loescher, answer some questions from SERVE on restructuring assessment in their classrooms.

Why were you willing to accept a change in assessment strategies?

Two influences outside the school introduced us to the need for better assessment. In our district, first-grade teachers began examining our reporting system in 1994 and found it inadequate. This examination increased our awareness of the need for assessment strategies that help us effectively document and report student progress. Secondly, with the publication of the Florida Sunshine

Rosenwald Middle School

Laura Brown

Laura Brown, a sixth-grade teacher at Rosenwald Middle, had the following comments when asked to respond to SERVE's questions.

Why were you willing to accept a change in assessment strategies?

Grading student work has always been frustrating to me, so I was open to new ideas about assessment. Once introduced to alternative assessment and the need to determine the scoring criteria up front (as part of the instructional process), I realized it made grading easier. I simply look at what the students have created and see how it compares with the set criteria.

Rutherford High School

Carla Lovett

Susan Butler

Two Rutherford High School teachers, Carla Lovett and Susan Butler, summarized their experiences.

Why were you willing to accept a change in assessment strategies?

In the last five years, our school has reorganized into career-focused academies. Within the academies, students learn specific skills related to their future work, as well as such important job skills as communication, interpersonal relations, and cooperative strategies.

Standards (state curriculum documents), we realized the need to develop assessment strategies for the classroom that were aligned with state tests *[Florida Writes and the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)]*.

How did you find time to make assessment changes?

Initially, the change in assessment was quite time-consuming because we were rethinking the whole curriculum/instruction/assessment process. We do not view assessment as a separate entity but rather an integral part of the learning process for teacher and learner alike. In fact, we believe assessment to be where the learning process begins. Some old ways of teaching, including content, procedures, and structures, were given up to reflect our new constructs about how children learn.

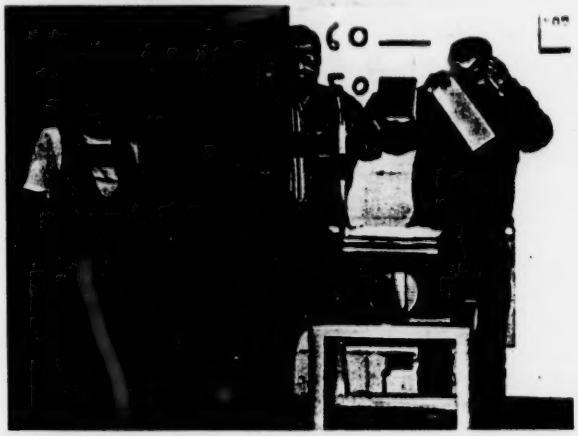
Are you making progress in aligning your curriculum and your assessments? Also, has your work in assessment affected your overall practice?

Now in the second year of the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and with the publishing of the Florida State Standards and a commitment from the superintendent to implementing a schoolwide academy focus where students can choose academic classes that are related to their goals beyond high school, we are in a position to look closely at improving the ways we instruct and assess students.

Our school improvement goals highlight the use of more alternative assessment practices in the classroom. In fact, 46 percent of our faculty have chosen to focus on alternative assessment as their individual improvement goals.

How did you make time to do this kind of assessment?

Creating the first alternative assessments did take a considerable amount of time because we were not confident. However, it gets easier the second time around. Working as a team gave us the support system we needed to work with our newly created assessments and make them **quality** assessment tools.



Since we are preparing students for the world of work, it makes little sense to assess learning with only paper and pencil tasks. However, very few teachers are trained to use other methods. Our faculty has identified this gap in knowledge as a source of frustration. Therefore, we are willing to embrace assessment training activities.

One of the reasons we are so excited about the opportunity to work with SERVE in this Research and Development project is the focus on "quality" assessment. After going to block scheduling and

Patronis Elementary School

tie curriculum, instruction, and assessment to those standards, we are on our way with a clear message to others who were initially resistant!

To answer your second question, a change in assessment means a change in curriculum and instruction. Our classrooms look very different from the past, particularly the teacher-student roles and relationships. Now our classrooms are learner-centered. Learning is now viewed as a continuous process for teacher and student. Specific feedback for improvement (instruction) is shared with the student as the student self-assesses what he has accomplished thus far.

Rosenwald Middle School

Are you making progress in aligning your curriculum and your assessment? Also, has your work in assessment affected your overall practice?

While we have to revisit and revise some of our assessment tasks, we have made progress in creating alternative assessments that closely align with our curriculum. Alternative assessment has changed the way I view assessment in my classroom. I place a greater importance on setting the expectations up front instead of surprising my students with what it is I'm looking for when I

Rutherford High School

How did you make time to do this kind of assessment?

Designing an assessment instrument takes no longer than authoring a test or worksheet. Usually, the design consists of a rubric. Many times, the students are involved in the design of this rubric. Their input assures that students understand the criteria on which they will be evaluated. We look on this activity as another chance for teaching the skills to be assessed. By involving students, teacher planning time is conserved.

PERSONAL

What has been the impact on students?

Ask any student, and he or she will tell you—learning is fun! Since assessment is ongoing and often done on an individual basis, much of the pressure of having "one chance to perform" is gone. We implemented interactive, challenging, and real-world assessments. With these assessments, the students seem to transfer knowledge by bringing in or making things at home related to the learning. They continue to ask questions, extending the learning from the performance assessments we implemented.

Students have been achieving at a much higher level than before, but the most powerful impact has been their growing ability to demonstrate their learning through quality performances and products and to articulate their achievement to others.

What are the positives of using "alternative" assessment?

Alternative assessment allows students to show what they know in different ways. While the standard is prescribed, the product, process, or project students create to demonstrate their knowledge can be individualized. When students grade their work. The students have also been conditioned to now expect the criteria up front.

What is the impact on students?

The impact for my students is that they now have an opportunity to show what they know and can do in several different ways.

For a student who suffers from test anxiety, alternative assessment provides him or her a means to be assessed without being in that structured testing environment.

In addition, I feel that a variety of assessments gives students a chance to show off their individual strengths or talents. Students who may have exceptional artistic talent would never have a chance to express that through a paper-pencil test, but they could if they were creating a product to show what they had learned.

Lastly, I feel this form of assessment gives students a roadmap or plan to follow. Students know what it is we are expecting and can use the criteria as a plan or guide to complete the assignment.

However, implementation of a performance assessment can be very time-consuming. If the learning activity requires a culminating student presentation, the student audience participates in the assessment. By fulfilling the role of evaluator, students have ample opportunities to observe exemplary as well as sub-standard practice. Assignments which generate projects probably take the least amount of class time but can be very labor-intensive for the teacher if he or she tries to assess each individual student project. For this reason, we again suggest that students assist in the assessment process.

Are you making progress in aligning your curriculum and your assessments? Also, has your work in assessment affected your overall practice?

We feel we ARE making progress, but this progress is slow and incremental. As teachers, we were used to teaching the "state curriculum." Now with the new Sunshine State Standards which are far less detailed than the previous state curriculum guides, we feel a new freedom in implementing our curriculum, but we are also

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Patronis Elementary School

are empowered to make these choices, they begin to take responsibility for their learning, question and think critically about the world around them, and see that their actions have consequences for their lives and those of others around them.

In traditional teaching, the assessment is often the endpoint. There is little reason for learning to continue after a test. With "alternative" assessment, the journey continues with more learning. We believe if we strive to assess children in real and relevant ways, they will transfer what they have learned to their lives outside school.

Rosenwald Middle School

What are the positives of using "alternative" assessments?

When using alternative assessment, students know what they must do to achieve success. A second positive is that parents see what it is that the teacher is asking for. When parents understand what it is the teacher wants, they are more likely to help the student if he or she needs assistance. Using alternative assessments helps me see what strengths and weaknesses my students have because they

Rutherford High School

cognizant of the great responsibility this entails. We must individually set the benchmarks by which our students will be measured and then ensure that instruction enables them to meet these expectations. The very act of assessment then becomes an extension of the instruction.

PERSONAL

What are the negatives? Be honest!

Although alternative assessment is a step in the right direction, schools should be cautious before assuming this will automatically impact student achievement.

Teachers need time to reflect on current practice, to learn new teaching approaches, and to design assessments. Teachers' first experiences with crafting alternative assessments should be carefully guided. If teachers are not instructed and monitored throughout the implementation of alternative assessment, time, energy, and resources might go into assessments lacking relevance, rigor, reliability, or validity. This will be frustrating for teachers. Ultimately, altering assessment has implications for schools in changing their support systems for teachers. They need to move from one-shot inservices to thoughtful mentorship programs.

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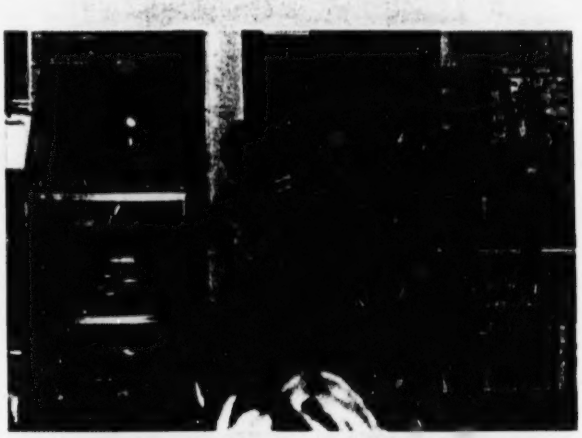
have to use and show what they know and not just pick the right answer or fill in a blank.

The negatives? Be honest!

The disadvantage that I see is the amount of time it takes to get started. After you have developed your first alternative assessment tool, you will become more comfortable doing it, and the next ones will be easier to create. You will need a strong support system to help you through the initial change.



What has been the impact on students?

SUSAN'S VIEW
A Science Focus

One impact I have seen this year is an increase in the use of higher-order thinking skills. I believe that a combination of factors caused this. One factor is the implementation of the new standards for our program. The other has been the use of alternative assessment.

CARLA'S VIEW
A Language Arts Focus

The impact on my students of my efforts in changing my assessments, even in a limited way, has been greater than I could ever have imagined.

My first attempt at a quality assessment last year, during my initial training by SERVE, was an assessment that I developed to accompany the unit I was currently teaching. It happened to be a unit on Transcendental

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Rutherford High School

SUSAN'S VIEW
A Science Focus

Our new standards call for students to experience career-focused activities, practice job skills, and improve communication skills.

I have used problem-based learning as a strategy this year. Students are given a "case," and they must make a diagnosis, after time has been given for research on the signs and symptoms of the case. It is obvious that such a process involves analysis of the data given, synthesis (as researched data and given data are compiled to make a differential diagnosis), and evaluation (when the future physician chooses the best option as the most likely diagnosis). All three of these are higher-order thinking skills.

Another impact I have perceived is that students feel more successful. They seem to understand

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CARLA'S VIEW
A Language Arts Focus

literature. I decided to give the students an opportunity to choose from a list of projects one which they thought would best enable them as individuals to demonstrate their knowledge. The list ranged from a diary written from Thoreau's or Emerson's perspective to acting out a critical scene from Thoreau's life.

Regardless of the project the students chose, the criteria and the rubric used to score the project were the same for everyone. I must admit that I was hesitant about how the assessment would work, but I was pleasantly surprised to find that not only did the students do an excellent job with their projects (their grades improved dramatically over some of the traditional test grades that were developed to assess a specific benchmark) but also that the project was the highlight of the year for many of them.

assignments much more clearly, and their attitudes have become more positive. I attribute this to the increased use of rubrics in the class. Through the use of rubrics, students are made aware of what they should know and be able to do by the completion date of the assignment. The most positive attitudes result when the students are involved in designing the rubric, rather than just being handed a teacher-designed one.

Involvement is the third impact I have seen since moving to more alternative assessments. Students are much more involved in their own learning. No longer are my class periods full of only written assignments; there are role-playing activities, artistic student endeavors, and hands-on experiences. Using project assessments, students can decide on the type of project they would like to do, based on the talents they have. We've had chemistry songs, illustrations, sculptures, cartoons, even a dance as products of projects.

In short, alternative assessment has helped create a happier, more positive classroom environment. Students enjoy the class and frequently express their surprise at their successes, which I find very gratifying. They think I'm a great teacher who makes learning fun. I know that I'm just a teacher who has found the secret—involve students in their own learning, allow them to use skills they already possess, help them develop new skills, and provide plenty of opportunities for students to feel successful. This "secret" is alternative assessment. ●

After my initial success, I felt much more comfortable about adding more quality assessment practices to my classroom. As the year progressed, I became braver. I decided to ask my students to help me develop a rubric for a writing assignment they were working on.

At first, I thought that I had made a mistake because their initial response to my asking, "What would be some important parts in a quality paper?" was to stare at me like I had suddenly sprouted a third eye.

I thought, "A-ha! They are not capable of being this involved in their own education!" I was wrong. **I began to realize as I talked with them that they simply were not accustomed to being asked to think critically and carefully about what they were asked to do in classes and why and how these assignments should be evaluated.**

This was the jump we needed to make in order to take the degree of conscious learning in my class to a higher level. Once we were over the hump, my students got excited. They were pleasantly surprised to find that I took their suggestions and ideas about their evaluations seriously, and I was pleasantly surprised to find that the criteria they developed for themselves were more demanding than if I had written the rubric myself.

I think of the two days described above as "critical incidents" in my class because they changed my attitudes, my students' attitudes, and the overall atmosphere of my classroom forever. In the process of developing these assessments, I have discovered that I still have much to learn and that there are unlimited ways in which I can include my students in their own education. ●

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Bay District Quality Assessment Training Project
UPDATE—Spring 1998

In addition to the R&D work being done in this district, Bay District has implemented the Target/SERVE Project over the past three years. This districtwide initiative provided a mechanism to train all Bay District teachers and administrators in quality assessment. To date, 1,700 educators in this district have been trained in Level I and II. This massive staff development initiative is unprecedented in this district. This training was very unique because a network of district teachers was utilized as trainers.

As a result of training evaluations, the district recognizes that continued support for implementation of assessment and curriculum alignment is crucial to increase teacher assessment capacity. This district also recognizes the need to address grading and reporting issues in the future.

SERVE's R&D work in Bay District still involves the three school sites: Rutherford High School, Rosenwald Middle School, and Patronis Elementary School. Here is the current status at each site.

Rutherford High School

The support team has trained the entire faculty, approximately 125 educators, in both Level I and II Assessment Training. Participants responded to the site-based training with the following:

"Being trained by my peers was a positive aspect."

"We were not told how wrong we were doing things or that what we were doing was bad."

"It was OUR staff that did the training."

Teacher Sandy Wilson comments:
"RHS is presently in the intense 'rubber-hits-the-road' phase of implementing, gathering, and recording data on individual assessment tasks. The assessment presentations will provide a crucible for mixing catalytic ideas and seeing dynamic growth. Some growth is expected of every member since the first phase of training was well received and seems to fit the style of several well organized programs at RHS."

Rosenwald Middle School

The middle school has formed an assessment committee that is working to align assessment and curriculum this year. Most of the teachers felt the need to practice and perfect their assessment work prior to additional training opportunities.

Teacher Meredith Knight comments:
"Most of us are progressing to the next level of designing and implementing alternative assessment. Not only are we at the review stage of what we've done, we're marching ahead to learn what 'quality' assessment should reflect. Some of us are getting better at designing assessments with rubrics that reflect the type of assessment process that impacts the students."

Patronis Elementary School

The elementary school has articulated among all grade levels to produce a curriculum alignment matrix outlining a spiraling approach to instruction and assessment at their school.

Teacher Kristi Fillyaw comments:
"We still have a lot of review to do on this matrix before next year. I also feel that we now have a direction to do good classroom alignment. I know what I am responsible for teaching." ●

Do You Have a Great Assessment Idea or Concern?

A performance assessment aligned to your state curriculum or national standards that is worth sharing with other teachers

An instructional process that represents a "theory at work" that other teachers need to know about

An assessment issue or concern

A "desperate moment" in the classroom and how you solved it

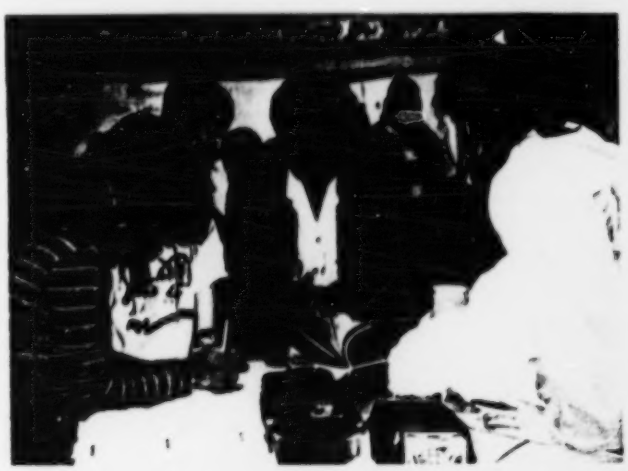
A need for information on assessment

If you want to share this information with other teachers, please see inside back cover for more details!

To order more copies of this issue of *Assessment Hotspots* or any other publication, please contact the SERVE Publications Department at 800-352-6001.

Spotlight on a Electronic Schoolwide Asses

Have you ever wondered what grade to assign a student's work? A "check" or a "check-plus"? An "A" or an "A-" or a "B+"? Grades are clearly supposed to mean something, so as a teacher, you really do want to be as fair and accurate as possible. The trouble is assessing students' progress isn't easy. Hence, in the realm of education, it seems as if we are continually seeking new ideas—looking for proven practices that not only work but are applauded by faculty, parents, and students alike. Bugg Elementary, a Creative Arts & Science Magnet School in Raleigh, North Carolina, has discovered such an innovative idea: electronic portfolios.



"Portfolios??" you may be thinking. "That was the buzzword of the 90's—it's old news now." However, you may not be aware of all the benefits of an *electronic portfolio*. This type of portfolio is wonderful because it allows teachers to monitor student achievement accurately and frequently by permitting both teachers and students to make personal entries and reflections about lessons, progress, and performance. Even parents can review these entries and, in some cases, elect to enter their own comments about their child's growth. Electronic portfolios are also beneficial because using them grants teachers the opportunity to embrace creative approaches to teaching, learning, and classroom assessment.

Schools may elect to utilize electronic portfolios for various reasons. Bugg Elementary chose to plan and develop this project to support an innovative instructional program at the school. The results of the program produced effective student assessments, but unforeseen software problems affected both the development process and the product. Even though the portfolio software did not meet the needs of the program, the assessment itself was a success. The planning process is a model that can be used in other sites that are considering the implementation of an electronic portfolio program. Teachers at Bugg Elementary were eager to share their experiences on how they planned and implemented an interdisciplinary assessment to enter into the electronic portfolio.

Wake County's Magnet Schools place a strong emphasis on academic, technology, and arts

Portfolios at Bugg Elementary

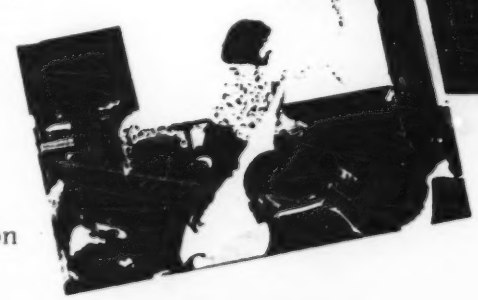
sment Project

by ***Mary Q. Penta***
and ***Sheila Wright***

programs. This Magnet School emphasis is reflected at Charles R. Bugg Elementary Creative Arts & Science Magnet. The school is funded in part through the federal Magnet Schools Assistance Program and the state's Kenan Institute for the Arts A+ Program. Bugg's philosophy and organizational structure reflect its involvement in these grants. The school is recognized for its state-of-the-art Mac and IBM labs and hands-on experiential science lab. Full-time science and technology specialists staff these labs. In addition to the emphasis on science and technology, classroom teachers integrate daily arts instruction into the core curriculum. Reinforcement for the arts is provided by Bugg's dance, theater, music, and visual arts specialists. The faculty also includes a physical education specialist, a Spanish teacher, and staff who work with special needs students.

Both the Magnet and A+ Programs foster enriched curricular approaches based on the theory of multiple intelligences (MI). This includes an emphasis on verbal/linguistic, mathematical/logical, visual/spatial, musical/rhythmic, bodily/kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences (Gardner, 1983, 1993). Using MI with arts integration, teachers enhance instruction by focusing on special strengths and talents of each student (Nieto, 1996).

The rich curricular emphases at Bugg have created exciting possibilities for innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Many aspects of student achievement in Bugg's program cannot be captured accurately by multiple-choice tests, and teachers have sought more effective ways of assessing students.



Because Bugg's innovative approaches to instruction required new assessments, a Core Team of classroom teachers and arts specialists met throughout the 1996-1997 school year to develop an interdisciplinary assessment. They aligned it with goals and objectives of North Carolina's fifth-grade curriculum and highlighted a unit of study about different geographic regions of the United States. Student knowledge was demonstrated

Figure 1

Core Team Schedule of Dates and Activities
Full-Day Work and Follow-Up Sessions

ACTIVITY	DATE
Orientation and Scheduling	October 9, 1996
Group Process, Visioning, Action Plan, Curriculum Alignment	November 21-22, 1996
Technology Training, Complete Assignments from November	December 3, 1996
Develop Templates and Rubrics	December 9, 1996
Review Progress and Finish All Incomplete Assignments	January 9, 1996
Prepare for Classroom Implementation	January 16, 1997
Use Assessments in Social Studies, Music, & Dance Classes	January 21-March 12, 1997
Continue Technology Training	March 4, 1997
Enter Templates and Rubrics into Portfolio Software	March 13, 1997
Continue Software Data Entry	March 25, 1997
Prepare for May Demonstration to All Staff	April 16, 1997
Demonstrate Portfolios and Planning Process for Staff	May 27, 1997

primarily through music and dance. The team chose an electronic portfolio format to record student performances, which meshed with Bugg's strengths in technology and allowed them to capture and preserve the richness of students' music and dance performances about US geography.

The Core Team included fifth-grade teachers Deborah Burch and Jennifer Fine, music specialist Felecia Locklear, and dance specialist Joan Certa-Moore. The designation 'Core' Team was chosen with the expectation that their work would become the 'core' focus for schoolwide implementation during 1997-1998.

In preparation for this, a series of professional development seminars was offered for the entire staff. Topics included an overview of alternative assessment; developing accurate pictures of student achievement; using alternative assessments in science, mathematics, and the arts; assessment for diverse student groups; and electronic portfolio demonstrations.

In addition to their work designing the electronic portfolios, Core Team members attended the professional development seminars. In fact, the final seminar was their demonstration of the portfolio planning process.

Once the decision was made to use an electronic format for the portfolios, the Core Team designed an interdisciplinary performance assessment compatible with the portfolio software. The following sections present the Core Team's planning and design process for an

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integrated arts assessment using electronic portfolios to document student work. This information is provided so that schools involved in a similar process can benefit from Bugg's experience.

Resources for Success

In September 1996, Bugg's Magnet staff met with the grant evaluator from the central office to identify tasks and set a tentative timeline for the assessment project. They chose a two-pronged approach for the 1996-1997 school year: the Core Team would work intensively to develop and implement a model assessment for one grade level, and the whole staff would have the opportunity to attend work sessions on alternative assessment.

The rationale for this decision was to develop a readiness among school personnel for adapting the Core Team's model in the 1997-1998 school year. To accomplish this goal, it was clear that the Core Team would need resources including

- ★ Teacher substitutes
- ★ Joint planning time
- ★ Access to outside expertise
- ★ Portfolio software
- ★ Portfolio software training
- ★ Additional computer equipment

Using funds from the school's Magnet grant budget, it was possible to obtain these resources. Carol Blankenhorn, Bugg's technology specialist, contacted the SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education (SERVE) and engaged Nancy McMunn to consult regularly with the Core Team. Substitute pay was budgeted so that team members could be free to work together for sessions with the consultant and for follow-up meetings between sessions. Magnet funds were also used to order laptops, external hard drives, and the portfolio software. In addition, Ms. Blankenhorn and a colleague from the nearby high school co-taught a workshop about the portfolio software.

Planning for Success

The first Core Team meeting, in October 1996, was an orientation and scheduling session. Teachers mapped out an agenda for the school year that included six day-long sessions with Ms. McMunn. They also scheduled four full-day follow-up meetings to complete work begun with her. Above and beyond their regular duties at school, each team member committed at least 60 hours to the planning and development process. They also allocated eight weeks of classroom time to implement and refine the performance assessments with students (Figure 1).

The team carefully reviewed the fifth-grade curriculum to identify an appropriate unit of study. It was important to select a unit that could be assessed in an interdisciplinary setting. For this reason, a geography unit that had been used successfully the previous year was chosen. The team's classroom teachers and arts specialists worked together to align the unit with goals and objectives of the state's fifth-grade curriculum. They then developed rubrics for the unit and tailored them to fit the software: selecting content areas to rate, creating rating scales, and deciding whether information would be entered into the portfolio software as text, video, or audio exhibits.

During their early sessions with SERVE, Core Team members realized that they had to decide whether their electronic portfolios would be used to capture and collect student work or to assess students. They chose the collection format, defining their portfolios as "an integrated collection of student work that shows progression of student understanding, reflections, and assessments."

They also decided to allocate space in the portfolios for information that would be helpful to them as teachers. They listed impacts they hoped the portfolios would have for all of those involved—students, teachers, parents, and administrators (Figure 2—page 44).

Even with an effective planning schedule, team members realized that it would take considerable time to create and use the electronic portfolios. Recognizing this, they decided to take 'baby steps' and not 'giant leaps' to ensure the project's success. (Some of the discussed potential

Figure 2

Bugg's Core Team: Important Impacts of the Electronic Portfolios on Targeted Audiences

IMPACT for STUDENTS
The Electronic Portfolio

- ★ Works as a means of self-assessment and reflection
- ★ Places more responsibility on the student for learning
- ★ Allows students to utilize technology to view a "big picture" of what they know and can do
- ★ Creates a mechanism for student individualization when considering instruction and assessment

IMPACT for the TEACHER
The Electronic Portfolio

- ★ Gives teachers a broader understanding of a student's knowledge and ability
- ★ Is a tool for sharing student growth with parents
- ★ Is a tool for establishing clear, fair criteria and expectations for students
- ★ Provides a variety of opportunities for student self-reflection
- ★ Is useful for teacher accountability—with assessment, curriculum, and instructional alignment at the school, district, and state level

IMPACT for PARENTS
The Electronic Portfolio

- ★ Allows for a deeper involvement in the assessment process
- ★ Works as a tool for reviewing student work and describing strengths and weaknesses

IMPACT for the ADMINISTRATION
The Electronic Portfolio

- ★ Helps to show that Bugg Elementary can make a difference in the life of a student
- ★ Allows a means for teacher accountability

impacts of the electronic portfolio are listed in Figure 2.)

For students, the team decided that the electronic portfolios would contain the following components for 1996-1997 (with additional elements to be added at a later time):

- ★ One integrated performance assessment that encompassed different disciplines based on selected goals and objectives from the state curricula
- ★ Predetermined process skills to illustrate continuous growth and development in a particular area, content, and multiple intelligence
- ★ A variety of reflections on student progress

For teachers, the Core Team decided that the portfolios would contain the components listed below:

- ★ An electronic storehouse for
  - — state curriculum objectives
  - — information and format on the assessment
  - — instructional methods, a time frame, necessary resources
  - — teacher reflections on the assessment
- ★ A cross-discipline profile that includes the predetermined process skills for the classroom and arts teachers to view
- ★ A student-reflection page about the assessment experience

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Figure 3

A Sampling of the Fifth-Grade Social Studies, Science, Communication, Music and Dance Objectives for Bugg's Performance Assessment

(Objective numbers correspond to North Carolina curriculum)

Subject	Number of Goals Addressed	Number of Objectives Addressed	Sample Objectives
SOCIAL STUDIES	6	12	4.2 Compare the physical and cultural characteristics of regions in the United States.
COMMUNICATION	1	1	1.1 Apply strategies to comprehend or convey experience and information.
SCIENCE	1	2	5.5 Investigate Earth as a landform and explore forces affecting the land and water bodies.
DANCE	5	9	2.1 The student will understand that making a dance requires planning.
MUSIC	5	5	4.1 The student will demonstrate ability to compose music.

★ A demographic file on students

Team members also wanted to be able to evaluate the impact of using electronic portfolios on students, teachers, administrators, and parents. So, they designed feedback sheets for these groups. For their own evaluation at the end of the project, teachers responded to a set of interview questions about the pitfalls and benefits of assessment development.

Once the groundwork had been laid in the team's initial meetings with SERVE, they began to create the performance assessment. Alhough the assessment area was in geography, it was integrated to include science and communication objectives and was implemented using music and dance objectives (Figure 3). The Core Team was able to cover an impressive number of goals and objectives in each discipline area with this one assessment.

The performance assessment was the most important component for the Core Team. Team members committed numerous hours to perfecting its design. Having listed hoped-for impacts of the portfolio project (Figure 2) and reviewed specific goals and objectives of the fifth-grade curriculum (Figure 3), the team began planning an eight-week, integrated music and dance unit about regions of the United States.

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Figure 4

Data Retrieval Chart—Checklist for Student Project Expectations

US REGIONS—Social Studies and Communications

CRITERIA	Yes/No	COMMENTS
Group Participation		
Participated with other members	Y N	
Carried out job responsibilities	Y N	
Resources		
Used three different resources	Y N	
Chart Creation		
9 different categories addressed	Y N	
All landmarks per region given	Y N	
All state names given	Y N	
Three labor resources given	Y N	
Five natural resources given	Y N	
Three capital resources given	Y N	
Three points of interest	Y N	
Three industries given	Y N	
Two famous people per region	Y N	
Three resources referenced	Y N	
Chart Style and Format		
Writing has clarity	Y N	
Writing is legible (easy to read)	Y N	
Writing is neat	Y N	
Mechanics correct (spelling, punctuation)	Y N	
Computer used	Y N	
Font 20, Block style, 9 pages	Y N	
Oral Presentation		
All group members participated	Y N	
Presentation within 5-7 minutes timeframe	Y N	
Creative style and design	Y N	
Questions could be answered	Y N	

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Figure 5
Eight-Week Performance Assessment Schedule

WEEK	*ACTIVITIES*
ONE	Introduced project, reviewed rubrics, students assigned to a region
TWO	Researched assigned regions in the library with the media specialist
THREE	Continued research
FOUR	Students given music to use and develop their musical and dance compositions
FIVE	Continued development of music and dance compositions
SIX	Continued development of music and dance compositions
SEVEN	Students came together to share their compositions. Music students in the west group from one fifth-grade class accompanied dance students from the west group from the other fifth-grade class—same for north, south, and east region groups. Then roles were reversed so that every student was both a musician and a dancer. Videos and still pictures were taken of each performance. Students rated themselves on the rubrics.
EIGHT	Students wrote reflections about the project and their performance. They also formed groups to decide what could be done to improve their performance if they were able to do it over again. As a last piece, they developed a visual to reflect their feelings about the project.

Throughout this process, other assessments, some daily, were used to make sure all goals/objectives were measured for attainment.

Team members worked together on both the classroom and arts aspects of the assessment, planning the unit so that students could use their own research about regions of the United States to compose and present performances in music and dance. The arts specialists worked with the classroom teachers to decide which students in each fifth-grade class would be assigned to groups to work on the regions. Group names corresponded to the regions that students studied: Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, West, Pacific.

The two classroom teachers designed Data Retrieval Checklists that students used to organize the research they conducted in preparation for their performances. Student groups displayed their research on Data Retrieval Charts and used a rubric to score the charts and classroom presentations about the charts. A total of 23 behavioral criteria listed under the headings Group Participation, Resources, Chart Creation, Chart Style and Format, and Oral Presentation were identified and scored with a 'Y' for achieved and a 'N' for not achieved (Figure 4).

The Core Team's two arts specialists, who saw all students in the school, had to adjust their schedules for other grade levels so that they could work with both fifth-grade classes simultaneously during the unit (Figure 5).

Figure 6

Scoring Guide for Regions of the United States

5th Grade Assessment Project – Music/Dance Performance

NAME:

DATE:

HR TEACHER:

Music/Dance Assessment (Circle one)

COMMENTS:

	STUDENT	TEACHER	
CRITERIA	**3 2 1**	**3 2 1**	**COMMENTS**
SKILLS			
LISTENING (HEAR THE MUSIC)	❑ ❑ ❑	❑ ❑ ❑	
ANALYZING (FORM PATTERNS)	❑ ❑ ❑	❑ ❑ ❑	
DESCRIBING (RELATION TO REGION)	❑ ❑ ❑	❑ ❑ ❑	
COMPOSING (DEVELOP ORIGINAL SCORE)	❑ ❑ ❑	❑ ❑ ❑	
PERFORM WITH			
CONFIDENCE	❑ ❑ ❑	❑ ❑ ❑	
CLARITY	❑ ❑ ❑	❑ ❑ ❑	
FOCUS	❑ ❑ ❑	❑ ❑ ❑	
CREATIVITY AND UNIQUENESS	❑ ❑ ❑	❑ ❑ ❑	
COOPERATIVE BEHAVIOR			
ACTIVELY INVOLVED	❑ ❑ ❑	❑ ❑ ❑	
POSITIVE ATTITUDE	❑ ❑ ❑	❑ ❑ ❑	
RESPECTFUL OF OTHERS	❑ ❑ ❑	❑ ❑ ❑	
AUDIENCE MANNERS	❑ ❑ ❑	❑ ❑ ❑	
TOTAL SCORE			

(The 3, 2, and 1 represents a range for scoring—3 is the highest a student can achieve.)

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Once student groups had completed their research, they developed both a music and a dance performance to reflect their region. After several practice sessions, the fifth-grade classes met in the multi-purpose room to share their performances with fellow students. Students and teachers assessed the performances using a rubric developed by the arts specialists (Figure 6). Students also wrote reflections about their involvement in the project.

Technology Problems

Although the Core Team considered the electronic portfolio software requirements while planning the assessment, development and deployment of the actual assessment became their key focus. They came to view the portfolio software as a vehicle for storing and accessing the assessment; then they focused on the assessment itself, rather than the technology.

This was a fortunate choice because software constraints forced them to revise the student scoring rubrics to a more checklist style and abbreviate sections of the teacher storehouse. Due to this and other software problems, plus delays in getting the school's local area network (LAN) up and running, the electronic aspect of the assessments was not fully realized. However, implementation of the assessment itself was very successful.

Ms. Burch voiced the Core Team's concern about not having enough equipment to meet the demands for entering and using assessment data:

We only had two computers with enough memory to load portfolio software onto them. We had fifty kids in total. This required a great deal of thought as to how best to have everyone enter their exhibits and reflections onto the computer.

Teachers recalled how they were forced "to modify the rubrics to checklists and storehouse information of the assessment because of software glitches."

Even Bugg's well-equipped computer labs were over-taxed by the demands for computer entry and storage of electronic portfolios for each individual student. Assessments of this nature with text, photo, video, and audio components require large amounts of computer storage space.

Scheduled to be operational by November 1996, Bugg's LAN was still not in place when school opened in fall 1997. Without it, there was insufficient space for individual portfolios containing the multi-media exhibits so essential in Bugg's integrated-arts setting.

An additional problem lay in obtaining user-friendly, efficient, and effective software for electronic portfolios. Grady Profile (which may work for others) was very difficult for our teachers to learn, and it was limited in flexibility and capacity for thorough rubrics or for the planned teacher storehouse.

Both Mac and IBM programs for electronic portfolios have been purchased by other schools in the district; however, no electronic portfolio is currently completed or operating successfully. One middle school is using Hyper Studio for portfolios, and this might be an option for Bugg.

Also under consideration are the following:

- ★ Tracking progress as schools in the district use Mac or IBM portfolio software
- ★ Reviewing programs being used successfully in other districts

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★ Contracting with a local developer for custom software for Bugg

Whatever the option, Bugg staff will carefully review and actually use any software prior to purchasing it. Now that their assessments have been fully planned and implemented, they have a product, as it were, with which to test any software to ensure that it will meet their needs.

In the meantime, last year's assessment is ready for implementation with this year's fifth-graders. Last year, there were 50 students in two fifth-grade classes. This year there are almost 70 students in three fifth-grade classes, meaning that even more computer access and storage space will be needed. Because the assessment itself has been planned, it will be possible to focus on meeting the needs of more students.

Plans for 1997-1998

At Bugg, Core Team members are available for teachers who are beginning the assessment development process. This builds on the foundation provided last year in Bugg's staff development seminars.

In addition to serving as a resource within their school, the Core Team is working to disseminate information about the electronic portfolio planning process to other schools and districts. Two teachers from the Core Team traveled to Florida to make a presentation and exchange ideas with participants in SERVE's R&D site there, and the entire Core Team presented their planning model at SERVE's October 1997 School Improvement Forum in Atlanta. ●

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Nieto, S. (1996) *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education,* New York: Longman Press.

For more information about our integrated performance assessment or our experience with electronic portfolios, contact:

Mary Q. Penta, Ph.D., the evaluation specialist for Wake County Public Schools System's federal Magnet Grant.

Sheila Wright, a doctoral candidate at North Carolina State University, Bugg's part-time arts liaison, and currently a recruiter for the Magnet Program

Participating teachers in the Core Team included

Deborah Burch, Fifth Grade

Jennifer Fine, Fifth Grade

Felecia Locklear, Music Specialist

Joan Certa-Moore, Dance Specialist

Carol Blankenhorn, Technology Specialist

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What's Happening in Other States?

Spotlight on South Carolina's Office of Assessment

By Susan Agruso, Cathi Snyder, and Marc Drews

We at SERVE are often asked by people in the six southeastern states, "What are other states doing to increase teacher assessment capacity and to improve student performance?" This section provides a spotlight on a regional Department of Education's work in assessment.

Like many states, South Carolina is in the midst of a major reform effort to raise standards and improve student learning. Every aspect of its educational system is touched by this reform. Ensuring that all the pieces are linked together to form a common focus allows the state to move forward for the benefit of all students.

From the beginning, one critical forward factor has been recognized—it is vital that our teachers, administrators, and members of the community have active roles throughout the process. In this article, a description of how South Carolina's Office of Assessment has involved the educational community is depicted.

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Curriculum Frameworks

South Carolina's curriculum frameworks do more than merely establish the subject-area content students should be taught at different grade levels; they also outline the broad goals for education and clarify for teachers, administrators, and parents the connections among all aspects of a good instructional program. The frameworks provide the information schools need to understand in order to establish strong programs to help all children achieve at high levels. The frameworks address such questions as:

- What are the best teaching strategies for helping children learn? What types of manipulatives should be used?
- What are good instructional materials? Should those materials integrate skills and content?
- How does a teacher create or select the best kinds of assessment to determine if students are meeting high standards?
- How can technology enhance the teaching/learning process?

In South Carolina, frameworks are developed by a team of teachers, college/university professors, and others with expertise in the subject area. Drafts of each framework are broadly disseminated to the public and business community for their review. The feedback collected is then used to revise the framework before it is presented to the State Board of Education.

Frameworks in mathematics, English language arts, science, foreign languages, and visual and performing arts have been adopted by the Board. Writing teams are currently working on frameworks in social studies, physical education, and health and safety.

Each framework serves as the focus for all reform activities in South Carolina by coordinating activities such as

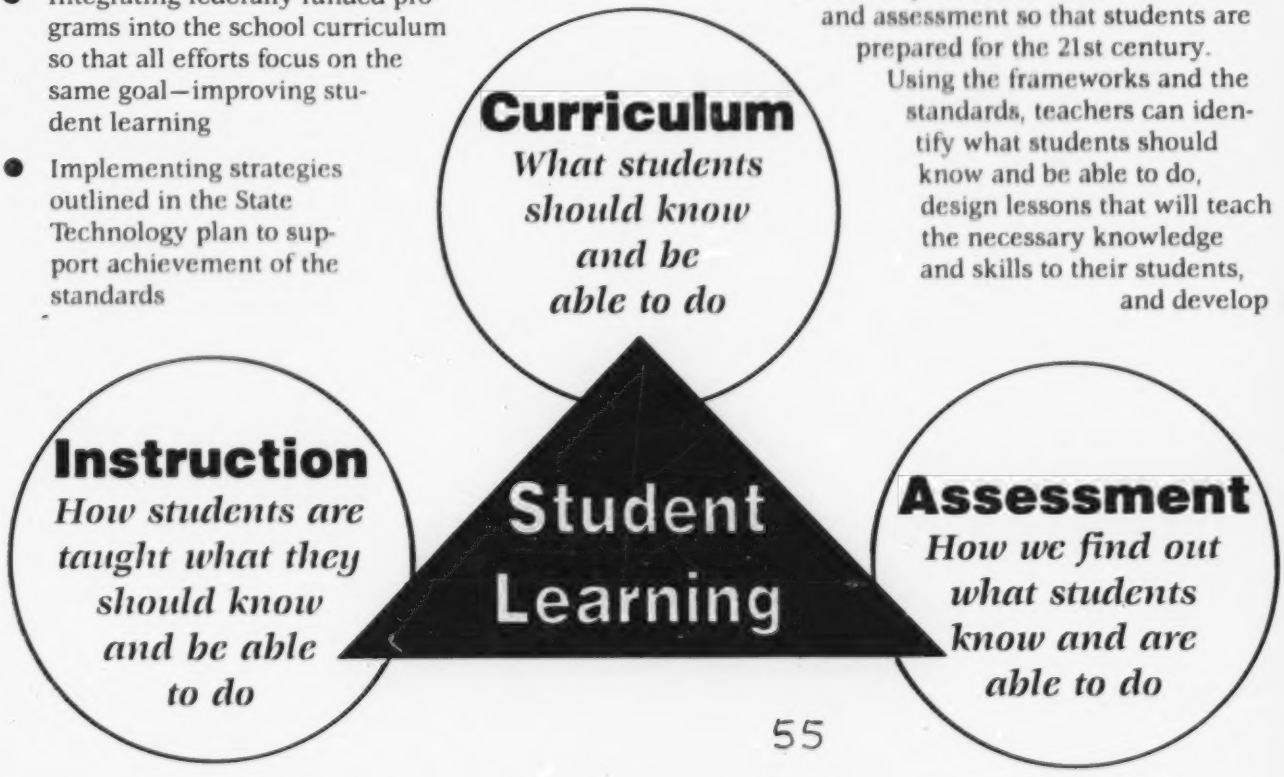
- Choosing instructional materials based on how well they cover the content described in the frameworks
- Awarding grants to teachers who link the goals of the grant to the frameworks
- Developing assessments that are aligned to content standards in the frameworks
- Conducting staff development aimed at helping teachers and administrators internalize and use the frameworks
- Revising teacher certification requirements to reflect what teachers should know and be able to do to deliver content standards
- Integrating federally funded programs into the school curriculum so that all efforts focus on the same goal—improving student learning
- Implementing strategies outlined in the State Technology plan to support achievement of the standards
- Working with parents to best meet the needs of all students

Since the state tests given in South Carolina are currently being changed, it is important for everyone—parents, teachers, administrators, students, and the community—to know what South Carolina expects students to know and be able to do.

The academic achievement standards, which are based on the content standards in the curriculum frameworks, are designed to do just that. They describe in detail the knowledge and skills expected in mathematics, English language arts, and science for students in kindergarten through grade 12 and are aligned with standards used nationally and internationally.

Academic achievement standards are currently being developed in foreign language and the visual and performing arts and will eventually be developed in social studies, physical education, and health and safety.

The standards, developed by subject-area experts from K-12 classrooms and higher education, help educators plan curriculum, instruction, and assessment so that students are prepared for the 21st century. Using the frameworks and the standards, teachers can identify what students should know and be able to do, design lessons that will teach the necessary knowledge and skills to their students, and develop


Curriculum
What students should know and be able to do
Instruction
How students are taught what they should know and be able to do
Student Learning
Assessment
How we find out what students know and are able to do

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classroom assessments that determine what the students have learned.

As shown in the diagram, when these three pieces match, the focus is on student learning. Thus, only through establishing a clear link and direct correspondence among the components of student learning—curriculum, instruction, and assessment—can we pave the way for improving student achievement.

Student Assessment

Since 1981, South Carolina has expected students to meet minimum standards of achievement on basic skills objectives which are tested through the Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP). BSAP is given in grades three (reading, math, and science), six (writing and science), and eight (reading, writing, math, and science) and as an Exit Examination (reading, writing, and math) beginning in grade ten.

BSAP was a step in the right direction, a beginning step for setting standards for student performance and guaranteeing that all students possess knowledge of at least the basic skills. However, by today's standards, the expectations set by BSAP are just too low, and it is time to take the next step in moving students toward high levels of academic achievement.

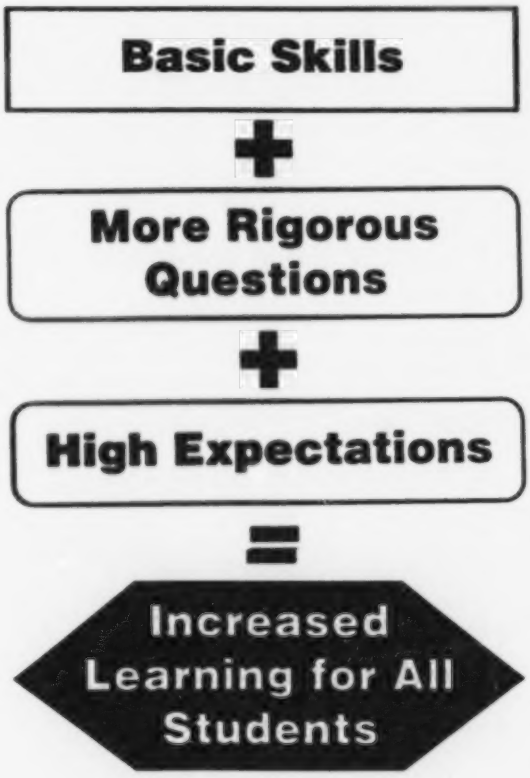
With the adoption of state frameworks and academic achievement standards in mathematics, English language arts, and science, South Carolina is adding more rigorous test questions to the state criterion-referenced test. In the years to come, students will still be required to know the basics, but they must also be able to demonstrate that they can apply what they have learned, solve complex problems, and read and write at a level appropriate for a high school graduate in the 21st century.

The new test questions include a variety of item formats: multiple-choice, open-response (short-answer), and open-ended (extended-response) questions. Classroom teachers who are using the curriculum frameworks and the academic achievement standards in their classrooms are developing many of these questions.

State and national experts in mathematics, English language arts, science, and the technical aspects of test design will review the items they develop. Other committees, which will include representatives from the community, will review the items to ensure that they are free from any form of bias, that they accommodate students with special needs, and that they do indeed match the high standards set forth in the frameworks.

These new items were piloted with students across South Carolina during the spring and fall of 1996 and the spring of 1997. The first administration of the actual test will be during the spring of 1998, when every student in the tested grades will take one of three new assessments—mathematics, English language arts, or science. Baseline data for setting standards and determining basic, proficient, and advanced levels of performance will be obtained from this administration.

In conclusion, this entire process becomes a formula for success:



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Classroom Teacher Support Strategies

Providing resources and support to classroom teachers is critical if South Carolina expects them to make a commitment to the new reforms in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The state has met this challenge through the use of three major strategies: 1) providing staff development in a variety of ways, 2) developing products and resources that aid teachers in improving instruction and assessment, and 3) establishing continuous-support networks so teachers can share ideas and strategies. All three of these endeavors have focused on issues important to classroom teachers and have addressed questions such as the following:

How do teachers teach students so they meet the state's standards?

How do teachers provide a rich variety of instructional experiences related to the standards?

How do teachers develop an effective classroom assessment system incorporating multiple formats (i.e., multiple-choice, short-answer, extended-response, experiments, and long-term projects)?

How do teachers develop scoring rubrics and communicate the criteria to students?

How do teachers establish connections across different curriculum areas?

How do teachers incorporate more relevant, real-world activities in their instruction and assessment?

How can school schedules be restructured to provide teachers with common planning times and longer class periods so they can effectively use performance assessments with students?

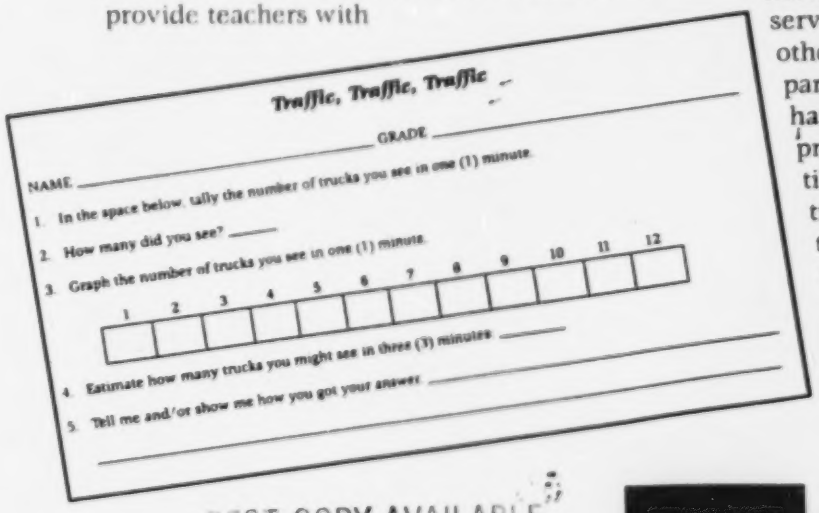
- How can teachers use narrative report cards that specifically identify students' strengths and weaknesses?
- How can teachers encourage students to be independent learners and to continuously evaluate their own work?

Several state initiatives have focused on answering these questions and more importantly have provided the support necessary to make the changes successfully in the classroom. A brief summary of these initiatives follows.

Support Through the 12 Schools Project and Portfolio Assessment Project

The 12 Schools Project is a site-based initiative that has helped teachers in 36 schools in the state develop performance assessments that reflect the high standards from the state's curriculum frameworks and academic achievement standards. Staff development for this project has been provided by awarding grant money to individual schools and by state-sponsored training sessions and site visitations. The Portfolio Assessment Project involves teachers learning to use performance assessments and portfolios effectively in the classroom. Staff development has included state-sponsored workshops at which teachers have refined materials and discussed appropriate strategies for their use.

As teachers in these projects have developed expertise, they have begun to serve as teacher-leaders in their regions and across the state by hosting visits to their classroom, presenting in-services, and conduction working sessions with other teachers. The work which these project participants have done with other teachers has greatly increased the impact these projects have had on improving communication and teaming between teachers/administrators and increasing student motivation through the use of engaging and meaningful assessments.


Traffic, Traffic, Traffic

NAME _____ GRADE _____

1. In the space below, tally the number of trucks you see in one (1) minute.
2. How many did you see? _____
3. Graph the number of trucks you see in one (1) minute.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

4. Estimate how many trucks you might see in three (3) minutes _____
5. Tell me and/or show me how you got your answer.

Products/Resources

Assessment Resource Handbooks are task booklets developed by a team of

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Task Description

Traffic, Traffic, Traffic

Subject Area	Mathematics
Grade Level	Grade 1
Task Overview	From a location on the school grounds, students will observe and count the number of trucks passing in one minute. Then they will estimate and predict traffic patterns for other time periods.
Curriculum Framework Standard Assessed	Strand—Number and Numeration Systems (Standard: establish strong sense of number by exploring concepts such as counting, grouping, place value [other bases as well as base ten], and estimating)
Instructional Objectives or Processes Assessed	Basic Skills: counting, recording, and graphing data, addition Higher Levels of Learning: estimating and predicting
Prerequisite Instruction	Counting, recording, and graphing data
Required Materials	Student response sheet, crayon, pencil, slate, or book to place in student's lap while on school grounds, watch with second hand
Group or Individual Administration	Individual
Time Requirements	45-60 minutes

Traffic, Traffic, Traffic

Each student takes a crayon, a pencil, a student response sheet, and a slate or book to the designated area. (This task may be done in a variety of locations as long as traffic can be observed clearly and safely.) The students are told that they will begin counting trucks as soon as the "GO" signal is given. The students are instructed to tally the number of trucks they see in one minute and then fill in the graph section of the response sheet (attached). The teacher counts at the same time as the students to determine the correct response.

Note: Time allotted may need to be adjusted according to truck traffic.

The students are then asked to use this information to predict how many trucks they might see in three minutes. Students are asked to write a short explanation on how they got the prediction they recorded on the response sheet.

Manipulatives should be available for students who want to use them for estimating.

Extensions: Students may be asked to test their 3-minute predictions and graph the results or to predict how many trucks they might see in one day and explain the prediction.

Students may be asked to categorize trucks or vehicles according to type and make estimates and graphs for each type.

Traffic, Traffic, Traffic

Suggested Scoring Rubric Three components to this task are assessed in this rubric: tallying and graphing correctly; making a reasonable prediction; and explaining the estimate in written or oral form.

3 The student tallies and graphs correctly; makes a reasonable 3-minute prediction; and provides a reasonable oral or written explanation of how he/she arrived at the estimation.

2 The student's tally and/or graph may have minor errors. He/she makes a reasonable 3-minute prediction, and attempts to provide an oral or written explanation of his/her estimation, but it may not be as sophisticated as a 3 response.

1 The student's tally and/or graph have several errors. He/she cannot make a reasonable prediction and/or cannot provide a reasonable explanation of his/her estimation.

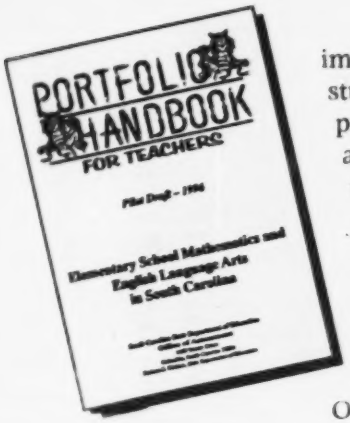
0 Student does not attempt the task.

teachers from the 12 Schools Project and state consultants and are available for elementary, middle, and high school teachers. They contain numerous samples of performance assessments and scoring rubrics (shown). Each assessment includes teacher administration directions, the state standards addressed, prerequisite instruction needed, time and materials required, and the basic and higher-order thinking skills assessed.

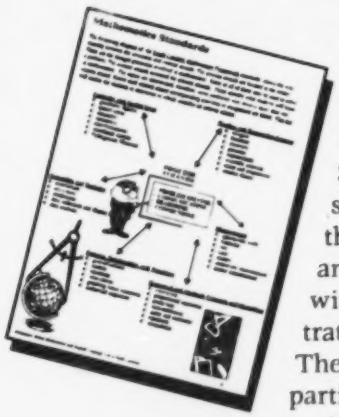
These handbooks have been distributed to every teacher in the state to encourage them to try some of these samples with their students and to begin revising their curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessments. Supplements will be prepared and distributed on a continuing basis. (Copies are available from the Office of Assessment at a cost of $5.00 each.)

Portfolio Training Handbooks and Resources are in the process of being published. These materials have also been developed by South Carolina teachers and state consultants and are intended for teachers and students with little or no experience with portfolios. They are available for elementary, middle, and high school teachers in the areas of mathematics and English language arts.

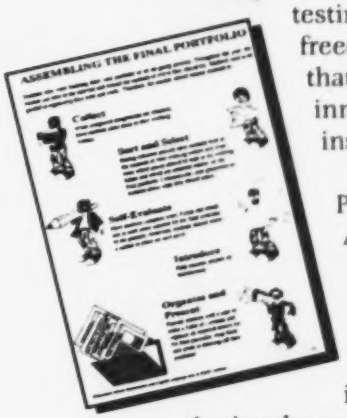
The training package includes teacher and student handbooks, colored tablets for students to use in recording self-evaluations of their work, self-evaluation stickers, wall displays for the classroom, and a sampler containing numerous examples of



implementation materials and student work. (Some sample pages from the handbooks are shown.) The training materials highlight the important issues and decisions that need to be made when beginning to use portfolios in the classroom. (Copies will be available from the Office of Assessment.)



Both projects have also worked to establish continuous support networks. Participants from the 12 Schools Project conducted several exhibitions where they have shared their ideas and work from their students with other teachers, administrators, and state legislators. They have been excused from participation in the statewide testing program to allow the freedom to form working groups that further the development of innovative assessments and instructional techniques.



Participants in the Portfolio Assessment Project have been involved in workshops and working/planning meetings 2-3 times a year for the purpose of sharing resources, ideas, and strategies for continuing the process of improving classroom instruction and assessment. These meetings have been invaluable to teachers who rarely have the opportunity to work and communicate with others.

Support on Issues Related to Continuous Assessment in Kindergarten Through Third Grade

In 1993, South Carolina passed Act 135, the Early Childhood Development and Academic Assistance Act. This law called for increased parent involvement in schools, more flexibility in funding the remediation of students' academic deficiencies, implementation of a variety of instructional approaches, and use of more appropriate assessment.

Since 1994, South Carolina has been pilot-testing continuous assessment in grades K-3 in a sample of schools. These assessments are expected to provide classroom level accountability, as well as achievement data for Title 1 primary programs.

Features of Continuous Assessment

- It takes place throughout the school year rather than on a single testing day.
- It is based on the assessment information obtained from observation of student activities (creating patterns from pattern blocks), student products (drawings in response to stories), and/or pieces collected in a student portfolio. (The state is working on ways to enable teachers to record observations and maintain records electronically.)
- Teachers periodically review these observations and student products and reflect on their students' progress by evaluating their achievement levels against a set of standards (usually in a checklist format).
- Reports of each student's progress and achievement level are periodically reported to parents in a family conference providing them with explicit information about their child's academic status and future instructional plans.

There are two primary staff development goals:

1. Enhancing teacher's continuous assessment skills by focusing on training for
   - Observing and documenting student achievement-related behaviors
   - Reviewing and reflecting on student assessment information
   - Using external criteria, such as checklists for evaluating student progress
   - Reporting assessment information to parents
   - Using assessment information for instructional planning

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2. Promoting teachers' skills in working with adult learners: This is critical in an endeavor to reach all classroom teachers. "Teachers teaching other teachers" is the primary model for training school faculties to use continuous assessment in their classrooms. Mentor-teachers provide site-based staff development for their colleagues and serve as resources.

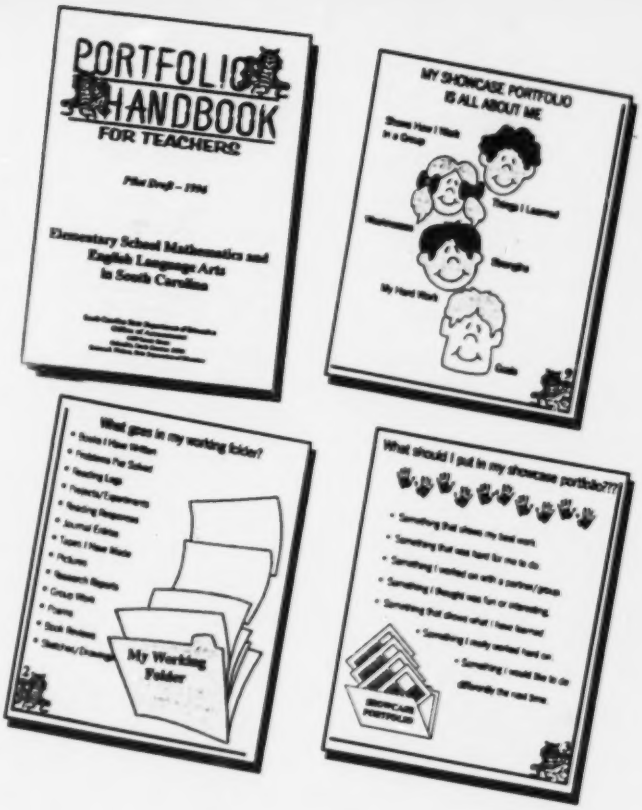
   South Carolina schools are currently field-testing and developing two systems for continuous assessment. The products/resources that have been developed are specific to each system.

   - **The Work Sampling System (WSS)** from the University of Michigan provides a complete set of assessment materials including checklists based on national standards, a portfolio collection system, and forms for reporting student achievement and progress. Also provided are teacher handbooks on how to use the system and resource guides on the use of the checklists.

   - **The South Carolina Primary Level Assessment System (SCPLAS)** has been developed based on South Carolina's frameworks and standards. Teachers using this system will collect observational data, samples of student work for periodic evaluation against a set of standards, and report student achievement and progress.

     Using the benchmark third-grade goals from the academic achievement standards, South Carolina educators created a developmental continuum of standards in mathematics and English language arts for preschool through third grade. There are SCPLAS checklists based on this continuum which reflect the variability in the maturation rate of young children and also lend themselves well to use in a variety of classroom settings. (Free copies of the developmental continuum may be obtained from the office of assessment.)

     The development of continuous support networks has been critical to the implementation and success of K-3 continuous assessment.


PORTFOLIO
HANDBOOK
FOR TEACHERS
Elementary School Mathematics and English Language Arts in South Carolina
MY SHOWCASE PORTFOLIO IS ALL ABOUT ME
What goes in my working folder?
My Working Folder
What should I put in my showcase portfolio???

   - Staff development in the use of continuous assessment began two years ago with an institute on Age- and Individually-Appropriate Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment. The Institute met once a month for nine months and involved participants in workshops led by national experts in early childhood curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Additional time and activities were devoted to developing networks among these educators from 80% of South Carolina's school districts.

   - Staff development for WSS is presented at regional locations to encourage local networking among teachers implementing the system. Workshops are provided for mentor teachers who are learning to conduct staff development in the use of the WSS, for administrators in schools using the system, and for all teachers in schools field-testing the WSS.

- South Carolina's publication of a WSS newsletter by the South Carolina Department of Education has also provided teachers with a forum to express their successes and concerns. It is also an effective way to keep all participants informed about the field test and the availability of other staff development opportunities.

Support in Understanding the Statewide Assessment System

Support strategies for the Statewide Assessment System are provided each year. Staff development workshops have been conducted to help district coordinators learn how to administer the standardized state assessments and to interpret the results of score reports. District and school administrators have received assistance in learning how to use test data to make improvements in their instructional programs. Teachers have learned to interpret test results so they can communicate the results with meaning to parents. Several products/resources have been disseminated to supply general information about the content and objectives covered on the statewide assessments, to describe test administration procedures, and to guide teachers/administrators through reading score reports.

To provide the community with information about the new assessments, the Department of Education developed a newspaper supplement entitled "Testing 1 2 3: Challenging Questions for a Challenging Future." The supplement shows samples of item types that are currently on the BSAP and compares them to samples of the more rigorous items that will be found on the new assessments. (Free copies of "Testing 1 2 3" are available from the Office of Assessment.)

With modifications being made to the current statewide assessment system, several new support strategies have been developed. Workshops are being conducted for teachers who are interested in writing test items. The first activity is to immerse teachers in the philosophy and content of the curriculum frameworks and the academic achievement standards.

They also learn about good test item writing practices. Involving teachers as item writers brings to the task something the state could not supply—the classroom perspective. Teachers easily target content and context that would be appealing to students.

Several local continuous support networks have been established with teachers writing in teams. Through this networking, teachers come to a consensus about what students should know and be able to do and how to move students to achieve at higher levels. Teachers and administrators also serve on several committees responsible for selecting good test items, designing test formats, and developing classroom-level support materials.

Support Through Regional Centers

Finally, another source of staff development, products/resources, and continuous support networks for K-12 teachers is the South Carolina Statewide Systemic Initiative (SCSSI). This permanent network was developed with a grant from NSF to improve teaching and student learning in mathematics and science as outlined in the curriculum frameworks and academic achievement standards. The network supports 13 regional centers or hubs, which offer a variety of staff development opportunities for teachers and administrators.

Teachers who attend "Curriculum Leadership Institutes" become teacher/leaders and can help others learn about exemplary instructional techniques and strategies, curriculum and assessment resources, and utilization of technology in the classroom. The hubs also serve as a clearinghouse for collecting, displaying, and sharing products/resources from teachers, researchers, national experts, and instructional materials publishers. Teachers across the state have quickly learned the value of their regional hubs for obtaining answers to questions and for locating math and science materials they need.

In conclusion, there are three valuable lessons that South Carolina has learned in making education reform efforts work.

Continued on Page 60

Brief View

Other SERVE Research and Development Projects

"Promising Practices in Reading Literacy Video Magazine"

A needs assessment and research and literature review conducted by SERVE spring 1997 suggest that we are a region of educators too often polarized by the so-called phonics-whole language debate. The apparent dichotomy, however, is a false one if one seriously considers the conclusions of the reading research over the last 10-15 years—it's not 'either/or' but 'both.' Moreover, as the region embraces site-based management—however tentatively—and states devolve authority to the districts and schools, locally designed reading programs become increasingly important. Accordingly, the three half-hour tapes in SERVE's Promising Practices in Reading Literacy Video Magazine series will focus on district- and then school-designed programs for the first two installments, followed by a third tape demonstrating how the classroom teacher can facilitate parental involvement in their child's reading, both at school and at home. The purpose of this video magazine series is to provide the viewer with positive illustrations of research-based strategies successful in increasing teacher effectiveness and student achievement that can be adopted or adapted in his/her district, school, or classroom.

For more information, contact
Steve Bingham
SERVE
800-755-3277

Implementing Formative Teacher Evaluation

Realizing the need for alternative models of teacher evaluation, SERVE's Formative Teacher Evaluation project was initiated in 1991. Many of the teacher evaluation plans in place through the Southeast were summative, ones that measured teacher competence. Many experienced teachers who had shown themselves to be more than competent on a summative instrument wanted something more. That "something more" was formative evaluation. Formative evaluation is a system for feedback for teachers that was designed to help them improve on an ongoing basis and promote professional growth. For the past six years, SERVE has sponsored training for school system teams throughout the Southeast who are interested in developing formative plans. The plans can include multiple sources of feedback (self, peers, supervisors, parents, students) and a variety of methods like action research, teacher portfolios and journals, and videotaping of classroom activities. One SERVE document—*Designing Teacher Evaluation Systems that Support Professional Growth*—focuses on the development of formative plans. An accompanying document—*Teacher Evaluation: The Road to Excellence*—is also available. Presently there are 18 SERVE formative teacher evaluation demonstration sites in Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

For more information, contact
Paula Egelson
SERVE
800-755-3277

"Promising Practices in Technology Video Magazine"

SERVE's research and development program, is creating a video-magazine series focusing on promising practices in technology. One of the videos that will soon be available to educators focuses on the use of technology for student assessment. In the half-hour tape, educators and students from school districts across the region show innovative practices, including assessment that is integrated into the curriculum, electronic student portfolios, and software that analyzes students' errors and makes it easier for teachers to tailor instruction.

For more information, contact
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800-755-3277

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Implementing Senior Projects (Graduation Exhibitions)

Based on the beliefs that graduation from high school should be based on genuine achievement and that student assessment is a critical part of the educational process, SERVE R&D has supported the Senior Project concept since 1993. Senior Project consists of high school seniors writing research papers on approved topics of their choice, developing projects related to the papers, and delivering oral presentations based on their work to a panel of community members and educators. The program is demanding because of the commitment and rigor required of students to satisfactorily complete a long-term assignment.

Benefits of the program include the following: students learn to apply their knowledge to a specific project of their own design, learning becomes an integrated process for students, high school faculties become more cohesive and collaborative, students demonstrate in a public forum what they know and what they can do, and students learn to assess their own work. SERVE sponsors Senior Projects training for high school teams, publicizes the concept throughout the Southeast through mailings, presentations, and conferences, and develops pilot sites at high schools (Garinger High School in Charlotte, NC, and Broad Street School in Shelby, MS). A SERVE Senior Project Network comprised of secondary educators was created in 1995, and a Senior Project document and videotape are in the works.

For more information, contact
Paula Egelson
SERVE
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Continued from Page 58 — *What's Happening in Other States? Spotlight on South Carolina's Office of Assessment*

Lessons Learned

- It is critical that school and district administrators, members of the community, representatives from business and higher education, and above all, classroom teachers play an integral role in the process of developing, implementing, and evaluating all aspects of the reform effort.
- Changes need to have a common, central focus so that all the separate components are linked together (i.e., South Carolina's curriculum frameworks and academic achievement standards).
- States should continually share products and strategies that are inexpensive and easy to use. Often all that teachers/administrators need is a copy of the resource (i.e., curriculum frameworks, academic achievement standards, Assessment Resource Handbooks, portfolio training materials, K-3 continuous assessment materials, etc.) and planning time. Cost commitments have been minimal for the materials and the staff development sessions conducted. However, regardless of cost, the focus must be on what teachers can readily use in the classroom. They must be able to say, "I can try this tomorrow in my class, and it may make a difference by reaching some students that I might be missing." ●

For additional information, contact the Office of Assessment,
(803) 734-8298

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Get Published!

Submit an article on assessment for a future issue of *Assessment HotSpots!*

Here's How

- **Submit** your **idea** and a **working title** for your article on assessment to

Nancy McMunn
Assessment Department
SERVE
P.O. Box 5367
Greensboro, NC 27435
800-755-3277
Fax 336-334-3268

- **Submit** your **final draft** of the accepted article. (SERVE reserves the right to edit materials for length, clarity, and accuracy.)
- Include graphics and pictures of teachers and students. (These must be accompanied by identifying captions and permission forms to be included.)
- Consider these six questions when composing your article*:
  1. Whom do you represent (school, district, state, etc.)?
  2. Why is your assessment project important for others to know about?
  3. How was the project implemented?
  4. What was the impact?
  5. Can the project be transferable to another site?
  6. What changes would you recommend?

Other Tips for Writing Magazine Articles

Use

- The "you" attitude—focusing on teachers and their point of view
- Short- to medium-length sentences
- Descriptive, visual imagery
- Adjectives and active verbs
- Comments from participants
- "Focusing event" openings

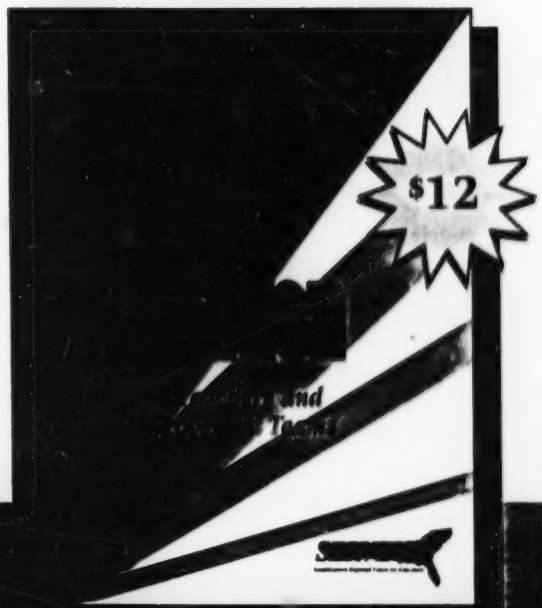
Structure your article with the following three elements:

1. **Lead**—"Hook" the reader and state the thesis.
2. **Body**—Offer evidence for proof of thesis.
3. **Conclusion**—Give summation and end with a nice close.

For more complete information on writing articles for publication in this magazine, contact Dr. Donna Nalley at the Tallahassee SERVE office at 800-352-6001 or 850-671-6081.

*An "interpretive" article includes the facts "who," "what," "where," "when" and adds "how" and "why." A "how-to" article tells how the project was done and offers information on how it could be successfully repeated at another site.

Information on Student Assessment and Motivation is Found in Chapters 3 & 5 in SERVE's Publication:



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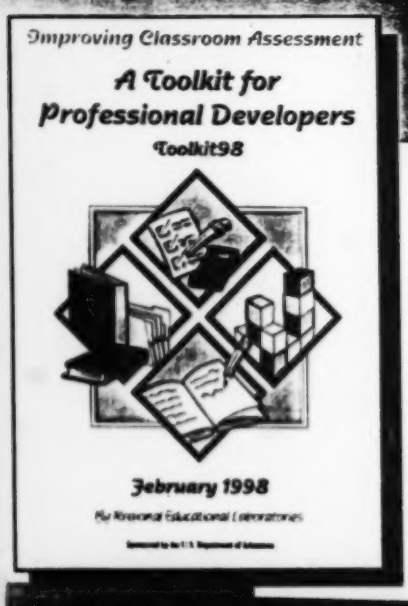

Toolkit 1998

is a 1200-page resource on classroom assessment. It was developed through the efforts of the federal regional laboratories, and it is for those who have the responsibility to coordinate and facilitate professional development in assessment for teachers.

If you would like to order this valuable assessment resource, please call the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory at 503-275-9562.

SERVE will be sponsoring several regional institutes to disseminate this resource through training. If you are interested in receiving this information about the institutes, please contact Nancy McMunn at 800-755-3277.

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